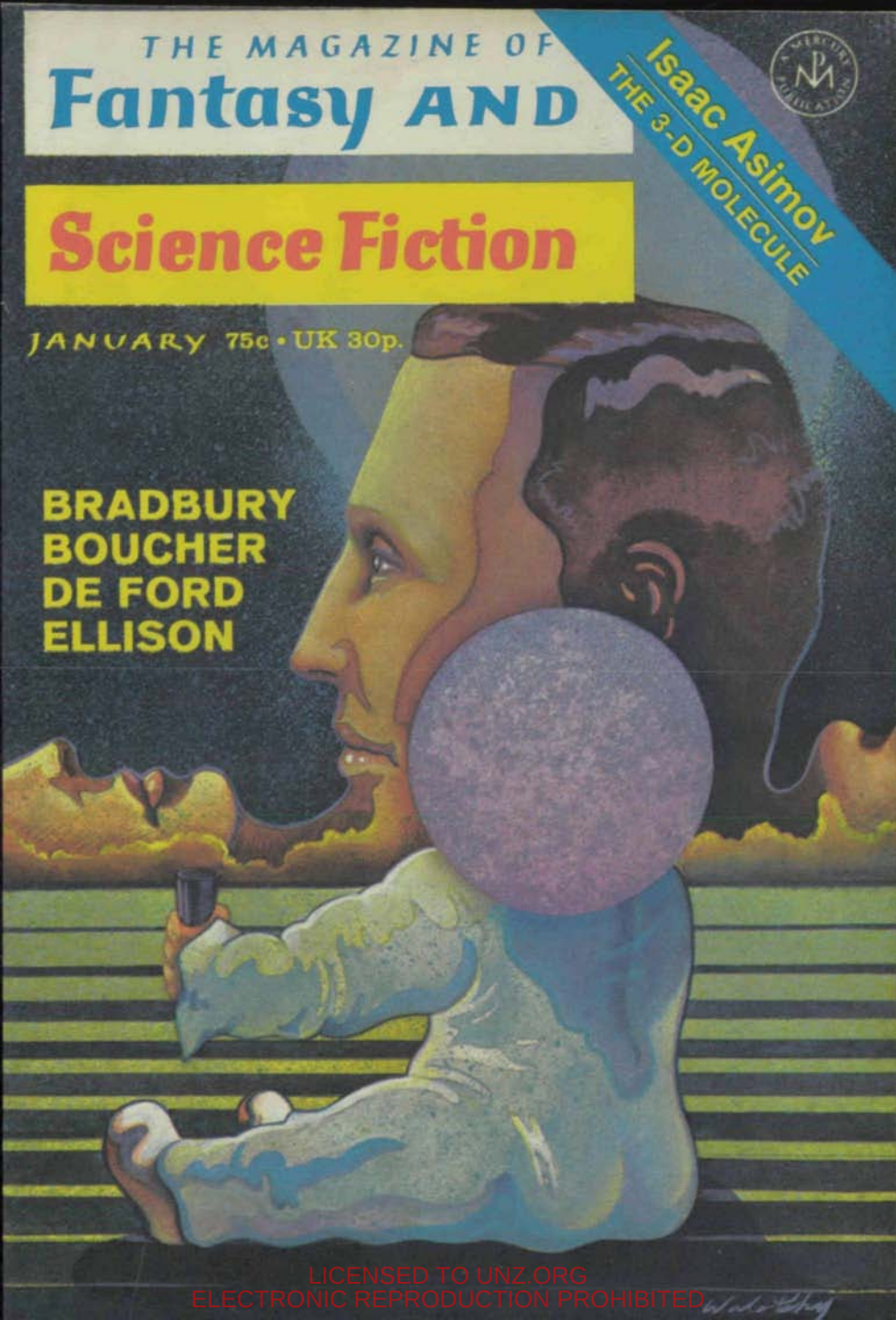


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christmas Gift Rates

Fantasy and Science Fiction

$7.00 for one one-year subscription
(Your own, new or renewal, or first gift)
$12.50 for two subscriptions
$5.50 each additional subscription

ORDER NOW — PAY IN JANUARY. THIS OFFER EXPIRES JANUARY 15, 1972. Add 50¢ per year for Canada and Mexico; $1.00 per year for other foreign countries.

Send FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION as a Christmas gift to:

Name .....
Address .....
City ..... State..... Zip .....

Name .....
Address .....
City ..... State..... Zip .....

FROM .....
Address .....
City ..... State..... Zip .....

1-72

ENTER my own subscription ☐ new ☐ renewal
Check one: ☐ I enclose $____; ☐ Bill me after Christmas
Please send me a gift card for each person on my list—to be personalized with my own signature and mailed from my house.
MERCURY PRESS, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

PLEASE NOTE: Because of the wage-price freeze, we are temporarily holding to our old subscription rates. The rates above would normally have been $8.50, $15.00 and $6.50 additional. This gives you a unique opportunity to subscribe to the expanded F&SF — 16 extra pages in every issue — at the old rates. But don't delay; we expect to increase the rates with the next issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction

Including Venture Science Fiction

JANUARY • 23RD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

NOVELETS

All Around the Universe	HOWARD L. MYERS	32
Carolyn's Laughter	ROBERT THURSTON	104

SHORT STORIES

McGillahee's Brat	RAY BRADBURY	5
Choice	ROBERT J. TILLEY	14
Corpse	HARLAN ELLISON	50
Training Talk No. 12	DAVID R. BUNCH	58
Jimmy	MIRIAM ALLEN DE FORD	62
Staying Power	HANK DAVIS	69
The Tenderizers	ANTHONY BOUCHER	77
Good-by, Miss Patterson	PHYLLIS MACLENNAN	82
Betty	GARY JENNINGS	86

FEATURES

Books	JAMES BLISH	27
Films	BAIRD SEARLES	66
Cartoon	GAHAN WILSON	85
Science: The 3-D Molecule	ISAAC ASIMOV	95
Dharma (verse)	HENRY M. LITTLEFIELD	81

Cover by Ron Walotsky for "McGillahee's Brat"

Edward L. Ferman, EDITOR & PUBLISHER Isaac Asimov, SCIENCE EDITOR

Andrew Porter, ASSISTANT EDITOR Dale Beardale, CIRCULATION MANAGER

Joseph W. Ferman, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NO: 51-25682

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 42, No. 1, Whole No. 248, Jan. 1972. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc. at 75¢ a copy. Annual subscription $8.50; $9.00 in Canada and Mexico, $9.50 in other foreign countries. Postmaster: send form 3579 to Fantasy and Science Fiction, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Publication office, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Editorial submissions should be sent to 347 East 53rd St., New York, N. Y. 10022. Second class postage paid at Cornwall, Conn. 06753 and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 1971 by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights, including translations into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This story has appeared previously in a publication distributed only on airlines, so, unless you do a lot of traveling, Mr. Bradbury's evocative tale of a remarkable Irish baby will be new to you.

McGillahee's Brat

by RAY BRADBURY

IN 1953 I HAD SPENT SIX months in Dublin, writing a screenplay. I had not been back since.

Now, fifteen years later, I had returned by boat, train, and taxi, and here we pulled up in front of the Royal Hibernian Hotel and here we got out and were going up the front hotel steps when a beggar woman shoved her filthy baby in our faces and cried:

"Ah, God, pity! It's pity we're in need of! Have you *some?!*"

I had some somewhere on my person, and slapped my pockets and fetched it out, and was on the point of handing it over when I gave a small cry, or exclamation. The coins spilled from my hand.

In that instant, the babe was eyeing me, and I the babe.

Then it was snatched away. The woman bent to paw after the coins, glancing up at me in panic.

"What on earth?" My wife guided me up into the lobby where, stunned, standing at the register, I forgot my name. "What's wrong? What *happened* out there?"

"Did you see the baby?" I asked.

"The beggar's child—?"

"It's the same."

"The same *what?*"

"The same baby," I said, my lips numb, "that the woman used to shove in our faces fifteen years ago."

"Oh, come, now."

"Yes, come." And I went back to the door and opened it to look out.

But the street was empty. The beggar woman and her bundle had run off to some other street, some other hotel, some other arrival or departure.

I shut the door and went back to the register.

"What?" I said.

And suddenly remembering my name, wrote it down.

Copyright ©1970 by Ray Bradbury

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The child would not go away.

The memory, that is.

The recollection of other years and days in rains and fogs, the mother and her small creature, and the soot on that tiny face, and the cry of the woman herself which was like a shrieking of brakes put on to fend off damnation.

Sometimes, late at night, I heard her wailing as she went off the cliff of Ireland's weather and down upon rocks where the sea never stopped coming or going, but stayed forever in tumult.

But the child stayed, too.

My wife would catch me brooding at tea or after supper over the Irish coffee and say, "*That* again?"

"That."

"It's silly."

"Oh, it's silly, all right."

"You've always made fun of metaphysics, astrology, palmistry—"

"*This* is genetics."

"You'll spoil your whole vacation." My wife passed the apricot tarts and refilled my cup. "For the first time in years, we're traveling without a load of screenplays or novels. But out in Galway this morning you kept looking over your shoulder as if *she* were trotting in the road behind with her spitting image."

"Did I do that?"

"You know you did. You say genetics? That's good enough for me. That *is* the same woman begged out front of the hotel 15 years ago, yes, but she has twenty children at home, each one-inch shorter than the next, and all as alike as a bag of potatoes. Some families run like that. A gang of father's kids, or a gang of mother's absolute twins, and nothing in between. Yes, that child looks like the one we saw years back. But you look like your brother, don't you, and there's twelve years difference?"

"Keep talking," I said. "I feel better."

But that was a lie.

I went out to search the Dublin streets.

Oh, I didn't tell myself this, no. But, search I did.

From Trinity College on up O'Connell Street and way around back to St. Stephen's Green I pretended a vast interest in fine architecture, but secretly watched for her and her dire burden.

I bumped into the usual haggle of banjo-pluckers and shuffle-dancers and hymn-singers and tenors gargling in their sinuses and baritones remembering a buried love or fitting a stone on their mother's grave, but nowhere did I surprise my quarry.

At last I approached the doorman at the Royal Hibernian Hotel.

"Mike," I said.

"Sir," said he.

"That woman who used to lurk about at the foot of the steps there—"

"Ah, the one with the babe, do you mean?"

"Do you know her!?"

"Know her! Sweet Jesus, she's been the plague of my years since I was thirty, and look at the grey in my hair now!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She's been begging *that* long?"

"And forever beyond."

"Her name–"

"Molly's as good as any. McGillahee, I think. Sure. McGillahee's it. Beg pardon, sir, why do you ask?"

"Have you *looked* at her baby, Mike?"

His nose winced at a sour smell. "Years back, I gave it up. These beggar women keep their kids in a dread style, sir, a condition roughly equivalent to the bubonic. They neither wipe nor bathe nor mend. Neatness would work against beggary, do you see? The fouler the better, that's the motto, eh?"

"Right. Mike, so you've never *really* examined that infant?"

"Aesthetics being a secret part of my life, I'm a great one for averting the gaze. It's blind I am to help you, sir. Forgive."

"Forgiven, Mike." I passed him two shillings. "Oh. . .have you seen those two, lately?"

"Strange. Come to think, sir. They have not come here in. . ." he counted on his fingers and showed surprise, "why it must be ten days! They never done *that* before. Ten!"

"Ten," I said, and did some secret counting of my own. "Why, that would make it ever since the first day *I* arrived at the hotel."

"Do you *say* that now?"

"I say it, Mike."

And I wandered down the steps, wondering what I said and what I meant.

It was obvious she was hiding out.

I did not for a moment believe she or the child were sick.

Our collision in front of the hotel, the baby's eyes and mine striking flint, had startled her like a fox and shunted her off God-knows-where, to some other alley, some other town.

I smelled her evasion. She was a vixen, yes, but I felt myself, day by day, a better hound.

I took to walking earlier, later, in the strangest locales. I would leap off busses in Ballsbridge and prowl the fog or taxi half-out to Kilcock and hide in pubs. I even knelt in Dean Swift's church to hear the echoes of his Houyhnhnm voice, but stiffened alert at the merest whimper of a child carried through.

It was all madness, to pursue such a brute idea. Yet on I went, itching where the damned thing scratched.

And then by sheer and wondrous accident in a dousing downpour that smoked the gutters and fringed my hat with a million raindrops per second, while taking my nightly swim, it happened. . . .

Coming out of a Wally Beery 1930 vintage movie, some Cadbury's chocolate still in my mouth, I turned a corner. . .

And this woman shoved a bundle in my face and cried a familiar cry:

"If there's mercy in your soul–!"

She stopped, riven. She spun about. She ran.

For in the instant, she *knew.* And the babe in her arms, with the shocked small face, and the swift bright eyes, he knew me, *too!* Both let out some kind of fearful cry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

God, how that woman could race.

I mean she put a block between her backside and me while I gathered breath to yell: "Stop, thief!"

It seemed an appropriate yell. The baby was a mystery I wished to solve. And there she vaulted off with it. I mean, she *seemed* a thief.

So I dashed after, crying, "Stop! Help! *You,* there!"

She kept a hundred yards between for the first half-mile, up over bridges across the Liffey and finally up Grafton Street where I jogged into St. Stephen's Green to find it. . .empty.

She had absolutely vanished.

Unless, of course, I thought, turning in all directions, letting my gaze idle, it's into the Four Provinces pub she's gone. . .

There is where I went.

It was a good guess.

I shut the door quietly.

There, at the bar, was the beggar-woman, putting a pint of Guinness to her own face, and giving a shot of gin to the babe for happy sucking.

I let my heart pound down to a slower pace, then took my place at the bar and said, "John Jamieson, please."

At my voice, the baby gave one kick. The gin sprayed from his mouth. He fell into a spasm of choked coughing.

The woman turned him over and thumped his back to stop the convulsion. In so doing, the red face of the child faced me, eyes squeezed shut, mouth wide, and at last the seizure stopped, the cheeks grew less red, and I said:

"You there, baby."

There was a hush. Everyone in the bar waited.

I finished:

"You need a shave."

The babe flailed about in his mother's arms with a loud strange wounded cry, which I cut off with a simple:

"It's all right. I'm not the police."

The woman relaxed as if all her bones had gone to porridge.

"Put me down," said the babe.

She put him down on the floor.

"Give me my gin."

She handed him his little glass of gin.

"Let's go in the saloon bar where we can talk."

The babe led the way with some sort of small dignity, holding his swaddling clothes with one hand, and the gin glass in the other.

The saloon-bar was empty, as he had guessed. The babe, without my help, climbed up into a chair at a table and finished his gin.

"Ah, Christ, I need another," he said in a tiny voice.

While his mother went to fetch a refill, I sat down and the babe and I eyed each other for a long moment.

"Well," he said at last, "what do ya think?"

"I don't know. I'm waiting and watching my own reactions," I said. "I may explode into laughter or tears at any moment."

"Let it be laughter. I couldn't stand the other."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On impulse, he stuck out his hand. I took it.

"The name is McGillahee. Better known as McGillahee's Brat. Brat, for short."

"Brat," I said. "Smith."

He gripped my hand hard with his tiny fingers.

"Smith? Your name fits nothing. But Brat, well, don't a name like that go ten thousand leagues under? And what, you may ask, am I doing down here? And you up there so tall and fine and breathing the high air? Ah, but here's your drink, the same as mine. Put it in you, and listen."

The woman was back with shots for both. I drank, watched her, and said, "Are you the mother—?"

"It's me sister she is," said the babe. "Our mother's long since gone to her reward; a ha'penny a day for the next thousand years, nuppence dole from there on, and cold summers for a million years."

"Your sister?!" I must have sounded my disbelief, for she turned away to nibble her ale.

"You'd never guess, would you? She looks ten times my age. But if winter don't age you, Poor will. And winter and Poor is the whole tale. Porcelain cracks in this weather. And once she was the loveliest porcelain out of the summer oven." He gave her a gentle nudge. "But Mother she is now, for thirty years—"

"Thirty years you've been—!"

"Out front of the Royal Hibernian Hotel? And more! And our mother before that, and our father, too, and *his* father, the whole tribe! The day I was born, no sooner sacked in diapers, than I was on the street and my mother crying Pity and the world deaf, stone-dumb-blind and deaf. Thirty years with my sister, ten years with my mother, McGillahee's brat has been on display!"

"Forty?" I cried, and drank my gin to straighten my logic. "You're really forty? And all those years—how?"

"How did I get into this line of work?" said the babe. "You do not get, you are, as we say, *born* in. It's been nine hours a night, no Sundays off, no time-clocks, no paychecks, and mostly dust and lint fresh paid out of the pockets of the rich."

"But I still don't understand," I said, gesturing to his size, his shape, his complexion.

"Nor will I, ever," said McGillahee's brat. "Am I a midget born to the blight? Some kind of dwarf shaped by glands?" Or did someone warn me to play it safe, stay small?"

"That could hardly—"

"Couldn't it!? It could! Listen. A thousand times I heard it, and a thousand times more my father came home from his beggary route and I remember him jabbing his finger in my crib, pointing at me, and saying, 'Brat, whatever you do, don't grow, not a muscle, not a hair! The Real Thing's out there; the World. You *hear* me, Brat? Dublin's beyond, and Ireland on top of that and England hard-assed above us all. It's not worth the consideration, the bother, the planning, the growing-up to try and make-do, so listen here, Brat, we'll

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stunt your growth with stories, with truth, with warnings and predictions, we'll wean you on gin, and smoke you with Spanish cigarettes until you're a cured Irish ham, pink, sweet, and small, small, do you hear, Brat? I did not want you in this world. But now you're in it, lie low, don't walk, creep; don't talk, wail; don't work, loll, and when the world is too much for you, Brat, give it back your opinion: *wet* yourself! Here, Brat, here's your evening poteen; fire it down. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse wait down by the Liffey. Would you see their like? Hang on. Here we go!'

"And out we'd duck for the evening rounds, my dad banging a banjo with me at his feet holding the cup, or him doing a tap-dance, me under one arm, the musical instrument under the other, both making discord.

"Then, home late, we'd lie four in a bed, a crop of failed potatoes, discards of an ancient famine.

"And sometimes in the midst of the night, for lack of something to do, my father would jump out of bed in the cold and run out doors and fist his knuckles at the sky, I remember, I remember, I heard, I saw, daring God to lay hands on him, for so help him, Jesus, if *he* could lay hands on God, there would be torn feathers, ripped beards, lights put out, and the grand theatre of Creation shut tight for Eternity! do ya hear, God, ya dumb brute with your perpetual rain-clouds turning their black behinds on me, do ya *care!?*

"For answer the sky wept, and my mother did the same all night, all night.

"And the next morn out I'd go again, this time in *her* arms and back and forth between the two, day on day, and her grieving for the million dead from the famine of '51 and him saying goodbye to the four million who sailed off to Boston. . .

"Then one night, Dad vanished, too. Perhaps he sailed off on some mad boat like the rest, to forget us all. I forgive him. The poor beast was wild with hunger and nutty for want of something to give us and no giving.

"So then my mother simply washed away in her own tears, dissolved, you might say, like a sugar-crystal saint and was gone before the morning fog rolled back, and the grass took her, and my sister, aged 12, overnight grew tall, but I, me, oh, me? I grew small. Each decided, you see, long before that, of course, on going his or her way.

"But then part of my decision happened early on. I knew, I swear I did! the quality of my own Thespian performance!

"I heard it from every decent beggar in Dublin when I was nine days old. 'What a beggar's babe *that* is!' they cried.

"And my mother, standing outside the Abbey Theatre in the rain when I was twenty and thirty days old, and the actors and directors coming out tuning their ears to my Gaelic laments, *they* said I should be signed up and trained! So the stage

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would have been mine with size, but size never came. And there's no brat's roles in Shakespeare. Puck, maybe; what else? So meanwhile at forty days and fifty nights after being born my performance made hackles rise and beggars yammer to borrow my hide, flesh, soul and voice for an hour here, an hour there. The old lady rented me out by the half-day when she was sick abed. And not a one bought and bundled me off did not return with praise. My God, they cried, his yell would suck money from the Pope's poorbox!

"And outside the Cathedral one Sunday morn, an American Cardinal was riven to the spot by the yowl I gave when I saw his fancy skirt and bright cloth. Said he: 'That cry is the first cry of Christ at his birth, mixed with the dire yell of Lucifer churned out of Heaven and spilled in fiery muck down the landslide slops of Hell!'

"That's what the dear Cardinal said. Me, eh? Christ and the Devil in one lump, the gabble screaming out my mouth half-lost, half-found, can you *top* that?"

"I cannot," I said.

"Then, later on, many years further, there was this wild American film director who chased White Whales? The first time he spied me, he took a quick look and. . .winked! And took out a pound note and did not put it in my sister's hand, no, but took my own scabby fist and tucked the pound in and gave it a squeeze and another wink, and him gone.

"I seen his picture later in the paper, him stabbing the White Whale with a dread harpoon, and him proper mad, and I always figured, whenever we passed, he had my number, but I never winked back. I played the part dumb. And there was always a good pound in it for me, and him proud of my not giving in and letting him know that I knew that he knew.

"Of all the thousands who've gone by in the grand Ta-Ta! he was the only one ever looked me right in the eye, save you! The rest were all too embarrassed by life to so much as gaze as they put out the dole.

"Well, I mean now, what with that film director, and the Abbey players, and the cardinals and beggars telling me to go with my own natural self and talent and the genius busy in my babyfat, all *that* must have turned my head.

"Added to which, my having the famines tolled in my ears, and not a day passed we did not see a funeral go by, or watch the unemployed march up and down in strikes, well, don't you see? Battered by rains and storms of people and knowing so much, I *must* have been driven down, driven back, don't you think?

"You cannot starve a babe and have a man; or do miracles run different than of old?

"My mind, with all the drear stuff dripped in my ears, was it likely to want to run around free in all that guile and sin and being put upon by natural nature and unnatural man? No. No! I just wanted my little cubby, and since I was long out of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that, and no squeezing back, I just squinched myself small against the rains. I flaunted the torments.

"And, do you know? I won."

You did, Brat, I thought. You did.

"Well, I guess that's my story," said the small creature there perched on a chair in the empty saloon bar.

He looked at me for the first time since he had begun his tale.

The woman who was his sister, but seemed his gray mother, now dared to lift her gaze, also.

"Do," I said, "do the people of Dublin know about you?"

"Some. And envy me. And hate me, I guess, for getting off easy from God, and his plagues and Fates."

"Do the police know?"

"Who would tell them?"

There was a long pause.

Rain beat on the windows.

Somewhere a door-hinge shrieked like a soul in torment as someone went out and someone else came in.

Silence.

"Not me," I said.

"Ah, Christ, Christ. . ."

And tears rolled down the sister's cheeks.

And tears rolled down the sooty strange face of the babe.

Both of them let the tears go, did not try to wipe them off, and at last they stopped, and we drank up the rest of our gin and sat a moment longer and then I said:

"The best hotel in town is the Royal Hibernian, the best for beggars, that is."

"True," they said.

"And for fear of meeting me, you've kept away from the richest territory?"

"We have."

"The night's young," I said. "There's a flight of rich ones coming in from Shannon just before midnight."

I stood up.

"If you'll let. . .I'll be happy to walk you there, now."

"The Saints' calendar is full," said the woman, "but somehow we'll find room for you."

Then I walked the woman McGillahee and her brat back through the rain toward the Royal Hibernian Hotel, and us talking along the way of the mobs of people coming in from the airport just before twelve, drinking and registering at that late hour, that fine hour for begging, and with the cold rain and all, not to be missed.

I carried the babe for some part of the way, she looking tired, and when we got in sight of the hotel, I handed him back, saying:

"Is this the first time, ever?"

"We was found out by a Tourist? Aye," said the babe. "You have an otter's eye."

"I'm a writer."

"Nail me to the cross," said he, "I might have known! You won't—"

"No," I said. "I won't write a single word about this, about you, for another fifteen years or more."

"Mum's the word?"

"Mum."

We were a hundred feet from the hotel steps.

"I must shut up here," said Brat,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lying there in his old sister's arms, fresh as peppermint candy from the gin, round-eyed, wild-haired, swathed in dirty linens and wools, small fists gently gesticulant. "We've a rule, Molly and me, no chat while at work. Grab my hand."

I grabbed the little fingers. It was like holding a sea anemone.

"God bless you," he said.

"And God," I said, "take care of you."

"Ah," said the babe, "in another year we'll have enough saved for the New York boat."

"We will," she said.

"And no more begging, and no more being the dirty babe crying by night in the storms, but some decent work in the open, do you know, do you see, will you light a candle to that?"

"It's lit." I squeezed his hand.

"Go on ahead."

"I'm gone," I said.

And walked quickly to the front of the hotel where airport taxis were starting to arrive.

Behind, I heard the woman trot forward, I saw her arms lift, with the Holy Child held out in the rain.

"If there's mercy in you!" she cried. "Pity—!"

And heard the coins ring in the cup and heard the sour babe wailing, and more cars coming and the woman crying Mercy and Thanks and Pity and God Bless and Praise Him and wiping tears from my own eyes, feeling 18 inches tall, somehow made it up the high steps and into the hotel and to bed where rains fell cold on the rattled windows all the night and where, in the dawn, when I woke and looked out, the street was empty save for the steady falling storm. . . .

Coming next month

TWO GREAT NEW NOVELETS

Goat Song by POUL ANDERSON

Painwise by JAMES TIPTREE, JR.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is Man a rational animal? Well, some men, some of the time, perhaps. This story concerns a man and a woman faced with literally a life-or-death decision, a choice so difficult that it threatens to strip away all reason.

Choice

by ROBERT J. TILLEY

"FANTASTIC," RICHARD Abley said when news of the Hertzog/Spannier team's success was made known to him by a wild-eyed Miss Wilkins. "Absolutely fantastic."

He wasn't a man given to exaggeration. The Hertzog/Spannier breakthrough was, in fact, the biggest thing since the invention of the baby.

Miss Wilkins babbled on while he tried to grapple with his own normally well-disciplined emotions. Her near hysterics were understandable, of course. Her fiance of nine years duration, a stolid, balding, normally cautious man who worked for the local power-supply complex had carelessly electrocuted himself eighteen months ago, only two days after an actual wedding date had at long last been agreed upon. Now, thanks to Hertzog/Spannier, the guests could presumably once again start considering the questions of presents and personal ensembles.

"—Changed?" babbled Miss Wilkins. "I mean, I'm *older* now." She collapsed into the chair on the far side of the desk, weeping.

"Now, now," soothed Richard Abley. He wondered, reluctantly, if he should go to her and pat her on the shoulder. In addition to being hysterical, Miss Wilkins had put on considerable weight since the death of her fiance, and he disliked fleshy women. "After all, what are eighteen months out of a lifetime? You don't think John is going to let a thing like that make any difference to something that, um, he's waited for so long, surely? Of course not. Of course not." He said it firmly, dismissively. Miss Wilkins sobs lessened faintly. "Well," Richard Abley said, smiling kindly. "This is wonderful news for all of us, of course, Miss Wilkins, but there really

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are one or two things I should get clear before leaving this evening. I wonder if you'd mind getting out the McCutcheon file? And I believe Mr. Derry wanted a word with me about that man we interviewed yesterday afternoon, Mr. Clothier."

Despite the magnitude of the occasion, seven years of tidily devoted service prized Miss Wilkins out of the chair and into the outer office where the sound of shuffled envelopes was punctuated by an occasional sniff. Richard Abley rose, shut the door, and went back to his seat.

He stared at the desk top, a small, hard lump in his throat, thinking about his father.

Like Richard Abley, his father had been a tall, elegantly bony man with stiffly formal features and a small, squarish mustache. He, too, had worked in personnel management, at a firm very similar to the one which now employed his son.

Richard's choice of career had been in no way coincidental, nor had it stemmed from a reluctant sense of duty as is so often the case with professional continuity in families. His father was in personnel management; therefore personnel management had been the inevitable path that he himself should follow. If Charles Abley had been a deep-sea diver, Richard would have been irresistibly drawn to the ocean depths, happy to trail in the wake of such a precedent, neither conscious of nor embarrassed by the shadow-like sameness of his choice.

Like father, like son, was no careless generalization in the Abley family. In addition to these marked similarities in appearance, temperament, and selection of career, their affection, too, had been mutual. Charles, a widower since shortly after Richard's birth, had raised his son with pride and care, ensuring that his basic needs were never lacking; equally, in his methodical way, he had seen to it that industry and good behavior were encouraged and duly rewarded. Richard's response to this treatment during his formative years had been to regard his father as a more than usually kindly and understanding deity; later, as his own understanding matured, he had come to appreciate that Charles Abley was, in fact, a rather unusual man whose patience and unruffled rationality were the exception among parents rather than the rule.

In a brutal and clearly insane world, these qualities seemed to Richard to be not only desirable but essential if an acceptable life was to be achieved. Correspondingly and perfectly contentedly, he followed what were, after all, the dictates of his own nature and, like his father before him, grew up to be a calm, rational, conscientious, systematic and good-natured man, this latter quality being not always evident in the rather rigid exterior that he presented to the outside world and stemming from a certain natural reserve also common to them both.

Despite the success of his own marriage, now in its eighth year,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard had been stunned by the death of his father, a premature and abrupt demise at the relatively early age of fifty-nine. He had seemed in good health immediately prior to his blue-faced collapse, but as is often the case with people who have never previously experienced serious illness, his solitary brush with it had also been his last.

A little over a year now. Richard Abley stared fixedly at the desk top, dimly aware of the moistness of his palms. It had been a lonely year, despite Margaret's genuine solicitude and her attempts to comfort him when memories that simultaneously warmed and pained reared up in his mind.

But now it was over. At that moment, all over the world, people like him would be shedding their grief, rejoicing. For he that is dead will soon rise again, Richard thought humbly. The grave was about to surrender its grimly inevitable monopoly, and from it would step his father, to resume his natural span in a world that could clearly benefit from the example of his many admirable qualities.

Despite the fact that Population Control Year VII had resulted in a reasonably satisfactory 5.04% overall reduction in the international birth rate, there were still too many people in a world the natural resources of which continued to thin at an alarming rate. The Hertzog/Spannier process was both cheap to set up and simple to operate, and to have it publicly available without some form of restriction to counterbalance its effects would have been like deliberately overloading a ship that was already perilously close to sinking from the weight of the cargo that it carried.

Argument raged, both among the religious community and at less elevated levels. The religious issue was immediately confused, some factions within its ranks holding the Hertzog/Spannier discoveries to be straightforward blasphemy, while others saw them as the ultimate vindication of certain Biblical claims. Other people concerned themselves with rather more down-to-earth issues, such as whether or not it was going to be either possible or practical to allow any sort of resurrection program to be put into force at all. If it should be given the go-ahead, what sort of limitations should be imposed? Should it be a selective program initially, restricted to people of proven stature—there were already small, largely elderly but highly vocal groups clamoring for the immediate return of John F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill and Gamal Abdel Nasser, among others—or would this provoke a dangerously violent reaction from a world population no longer in ignorance of its basic rights as human beings? And just how much sense did it *really* make to bring people back from the grave? How far back in history could and should the program be extended? And even if the choice was restricted to the relatively recently

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demised, how many people already elderly and frail would be brought back, for instance? And what would happen when they died for a second time? Would they, or anybody else for that matter, be automatically ineligible for a third chance at life? And what about animals; pets, famous racehorses? Were they to be excluded from such a program, and if so, on what grounds? Etc., etc., etc.

It was almost six months before legislation was passed. The International Council's Advisory Group to study the question of resurrection as it would affect individuals, states and the word economy—A.R.I.S.E.—would have preferred considerably longer, but public clamor had become so vehement that a pilot program had to be quickly approved and brought into force to at least partially reduce the temperature generated by this understandably emotional issue. As the chairman of the Group wryly commented at their first meeting, resurrection, like a great many other discoveries on which numerous fingers had been burned, was yet another unwitting fait accompli as far as scientific research was concerned. The mere fact of its becoming public knowledge had set it on a course from which there was no turning back, for the time being, at least. The best that cooler heads could hope for was to hold it sufficiently in check to ensure that the minimum amount of damage was done to the general social structure until such time as it became possible to make an accurate assessment based on experience.

The final prognosis was cautious, but moderately favorable. During the six months that legislation was being programed, a carefully selected cross-section of fifty-seven people had been returned from the grave. These ranged from a newly retired iron-foundry foreman who had suffered a fatal coronary only three months before, to a chiropodist who had been dead for a little over fifteen years. The foreman had readjusted extremely rapidly, the chiropodist markedly less so. The point was taken, the program restricted accordingly. Bit by bit, fraction by agonizingly considered fraction, the original rough format was amended and extended, until at last it was reluctantly agreed that little more would be achieved until the weaknesses that it inevitably contained came to light through actual usage.

Richard Abley remained outwardly calm during this period. His wife, a small, dark, mercurial woman, had seemed stunned at the time of the Hertzog/Spannier revelations, a not uncommon reaction among his acquaintances, the majority of whose powers of self-control were considerably less than his own. Subsequently, during the period when the phenomenon and its possible consequences were being discussed at international level, like a great many other individuals they referred to it sparingly, reluctant to build up hopes that could well come to nothing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

should the makers of rules and policies decide that the results would be so disastrous as to be tantamount to racial suicide and therefore untenable. But in his heart, despite his own personal reservations about the wisdom of making such a facility generally available to a species as emotionally irrational as the human race, Richard never doubted that his father would live again, soon; that once again he would know the almost mystical experience of facing a reflection of himself as he would be a quarter of a century from now; still himself, but grey, a little lined, fractionally stooped; a reflection that he had believed to be gone, if not exactly for ever, at least for the better part of his own remaining life.

He was at the company squash court, freshly showered and combing his hair, on the evening that the announcement was made. There was a small crowd in the dressing room, some, like himself, excercised and preparing to leave, others in the process of disrobing. All froze to stillness as the transmission was relayed through the small P.A. speaker in a ceiling corner.

The basic laws governing the resurrection program were to be relatively simple. To qualify, the resurrectee must have been dead no longer than ten years, under sixty years of age at the time of death and with no record of congenital illness. Habitual criminals, the mentally retarded, and victims of fatal accidents that had resulted in irreparable physical damage were automatically ineligible. One resurrection per family—the definition of which was both generous and detailed—would be permitted. All fertile members of families wishing to avail themselves of the service—it had turned out that an even larger number of people than anticipated had no desire whatever to see departed relatives brought back into existence—must undergo medically induced sterility for a period to be decided at the discretion of locally appointed Sterility Boards, extensions of the Population Control Service. Families in which pregnancy already existed and had reached a certain stage of development—three months marking the point of no return—would be ineligible for one year after the actual birth. Amendments to existing abortion law were included to safeguard against a sudden increase of applications based on emotional ties with the past rather than reason. Animals would be omitted for the time being, but consideration was still being given to the question. Subject to results proving satisfactory, the program would be run on this basis for one year, but amendments might be brought in at any time that they were considered necessary. It would start in a further two months time, and all applications would be dealt with alphabetically.

Applications would be dealt with alphabetically. Richard Abley relaxed, carefully containing the warm bubble of joy that swelled inside him, blessing the fortuity that had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

preserved him from being born into a family with a name like Zwort or Zukowski.

On the far side of the room, someone wept openly. Richard glanced between the hanging coats, recognizing the dark, bowed head of George Purcell of sales, framed by a brace of awkwardly consoling colleagues.

He resumed his combing, frowning sympathetically. Of course, George's mother. He recalled the circumstances of nine months before when the elder Mrs. Purcell had died, an event that had kept George Purcell away from the office for a fortnight and eventually returned him pale and red-eyed, a shadow that had only been retored to its former ebullient self at the time of the initial disclosure.

Asthma and heart disease, Richard remembered. He slipped his comb into its case and pocketed it. Poor George. Even if the late Mrs. Purcell had qualified in terms of age—which seemed doubtful—her medical history would have inevitably ruled her out. Whereas Charles Abley, mercifully, had had an untainted record of health and had just made it by the slender but irrevocable margin of one year.

He collected his belongings together, bade those in his vicinity a quiet goodnight, and left, tactfully using the exit on his side of the room.

His welcome when he walked into the apartment was not quite as he'd anticipated it. In his mind's eye, he'd had a vague picture of a scene that, without in any way being specific, nevertheless contained certain basic ingredients; an affectionate, understanding greeting from Margaret, the long-postponed discussion that was now no longer curtailed by uncertainty.

Margaret was there, but her greeting was somehow abstracted, slightly reminiscent of her reaction at the time of the initial announcement six months before. She patted his arm, an almost—absurd idea!—conciliatory gesture, and drifted to the kitchen to fetch his customary squash-evening snack.

Richard studied her retreating back, shrugged, and went into the bedroom to put his gear away. This, of course, was the trouble with emotional people. They always overreacted at times like these, unable to check the upsets to their digestive and respiratory systems that extreme excitement invariably caused. Margaret was no fragile, swooning flower, but she was a person of deep, if somewhat erratic, feelings, passionately expressive at the moment of involvement and subsequently drained by the force of these readily evoked emotions.

He put away his things and went back to the living room. Margaret was there, sitting by the drawn drapes, her gaze directed abstractedly at the opposite wall.

His snack was on the coffee table. He lifted the cover, took a sandwich, and sank into his chair.

There was a short, odd silence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard put his sandwich down again, unbitten. "Darling, are you all right? You look a bit pale." Margaret grimaced slightly, not looking at him. "It is the news, I suppose?" Richard asked. "You've heard?"

She nodded.

"It seems to have upset you more than usual."

She laughed, dryly. "It's unusual news."

Richard said, "Yes, of course." He stood up and went across to her, smoothing the hair at the back of her head. "A stupid thing to say. I think I'm probably a bit light-headed myself. But when I think what it means—"

"What does it mean?"

He slowed his hand, genuinely puzzled. "How do you mean?"

Margaret said, "Not generally. To you, specifically."

"To me?"

Margaret said, almost fiercely, "You're answering questions with questions. What does it mean to you?"

He said, simply, "My father, of course. Charles."

She nodded, and moved forward, away from his hand.

He stared at her, then at his poised, inexplicably unwanted palm. He dropped it beside him.

"Look, Mag, I'm not really with you. Wasn't that the right answer? What did you expect me to say?"

"What you did say." She rose, went to the coffee table, picked up a cheese biscuit and nibbled at it. She made a face, and dropped the biscuit in the general direction of the plate, missing it. Grated cheese scattered on the tabletop. "Damn".

"Look," Richard said. He suddenly had the disoriented feeling of someone who has found himself quoting from the wrong script. Carefully, he thought his way back into what he hoped was the appropriate dialogue. "It isn't this legislation business at all, is that it? Something else? What—?"

"Oh, it's the legislation business, all right," Margaret said. She sat down, crossed her arms and leaned over them, staring broodingly down at the carpet. She looked somehow very distant.

Richard looked at her for a long, baffled moment. He cleared his throat, and said, "But what exactly—?"

"Exactly, specifically," Margaret said, "it's simply that all along you've assumed that if it ever did get through, your father would automatically get priority."

Richard stared at her, his insides abruptly cooling to refrigeration temperature.

Margaret's own parents had rarely provided subjects for discussion between them. He knew very little about them, in fact, simply that they had seperated while Margaret was in her early teens and that both had subsequently died before he met her. The few occasions when she had mentioned them had been unhappy ones, plainly clouded with bitterness, and Richard had never encouraged her to enlarge on what was obviously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a source of distress as far as she was concerned. Now, like thickening shadows from the past, still indistinguishable in detail but unbelievably menacing in their very facelessness, they entered the apartment and approached him.

It couldn't be true, Richard told himself. It was a reassurance that emitted a hollow, insubstantial whisper in his mind even as he formed it. Margaret's relationship with his own father had been everything that could have been wished by all the parties concerned, surely? Charles Abley had been extremely fond of Margaret, seeing her not only as an attractive woman who bore a certain resemblance to his dead wife, but also as the result of a possibly unconscious gesture on Richard's part, a token of gratitude in return for the sexually lonely years that had been so conscientiously spent on his own upbringing. Margaret, in turn, seemed to have viewed Charles as an altogether admirable father-substitute, attractively overlaid with a strong resemblance to her husband, whom she openly adored.

The first six years of Richard's marriage had been the happiest period in his life, and he was convinced, in hers. Besides, she'd *said* that Charles—

Hadn't she?

He said, hoarsely, "But I thought that you—"

"You *assumed* that I," Margaret said. "In actual fact, we haven't *once* discussed this thing in specific terms. We haven't really talked about it at all. As far as you were concerned, it's been cut and dried from the start. Has it entered your head at all that I might want my mother back? Or *my* father? Has it occurred to you that a marriage originates with *two* families, not just your own?" She turned her face away again, her mouth wrenched down at the corners, suddenly near tears.

Richard felt a rush of affection for her. Selfish, selfish imbecile, he thought, viewing himself with sudden and unaccustomed disgust. How could he have been so selfish? Of course she was right, every single word of what she'd said. Not that she'd *meant* all of them, of course. She was, quite correctly, reminding him that simply because she'd chosen to remain silent about her relationship with her own parents that was no reason for him to have automatically dismissed them as altogether unworthy of consideration. But the point had been made now, and he must show her that he accepted the deserved reproof.

He went across the room and knelt beside her chair, patting her leg, then gently squeezing it.

"You're right, of course. I have been a bit of a pig, haven't I? But when you miss somebody as much as I miss Charles, you're apt to forget that there might have been other candidates."

He felt her leg stiffen. After a moment, she said, "Might have been?"

"*Were,*" he amended. "Once upon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a time, I mean. When you were a kid, I expect you saw them very diff—" He broke off as she stood up, her suddenly vertical thigh knocking his hand to one side. Still biting down on the uncompleted word, he stared with genuine astonishment at her hunched back as she moved away from him.

She halted by the wall, and turned. Her face was tight and very bitter.

"You still don't understand, do you? What I'm saying, exactly, specifically, is that I want it to be my mother."

Above the sudden roaring in his ears, Richard Abley heard a high, plaintive voice, quite unlike his own.

"But you told me you didn't love your mother."

"How many children believe that about their parents? Most of them, if the truth were known." She glowered at him with continued bitterness. "Oh, stop looking at me as if I was swearing in church. Hasn't it ever dawned on you just how much of an exceptional exception your relationship with Charles was? Continuous love and respect between parent and child. Ridiculous." She almost spat the word. "And hasn't it ever dawned on you that that was an aspect of your life that I envied like I'd never envied anything, anyone before? My God, do you realize just how lucky you *were*, having all those years with Charles?"

Richard steadied himself (he was actually *shaking!*) with difficulty. He rose sufficiently to seat himself on the chair that she had vacated, interlaced his vibrating hands and stared at her from beneath worriedly arrowed eyebrows.

"Look, let's get this absolutely straight. You're really serious? You're saying that you want your mother back instead of Charles?" He voiced the anguished cry that thundered inside his head like a berserk carillon. "Why?"

"I suppose I'm no different from most people," Margaret said. She turned and stood in profile, staring bleakly across the room. "I was too young to really understand my mother up to the time that she died. When you're a baby, you automatically depend on them and take what they say as gospel, but then you get older and it isn't so simple any more. They impose restrictions that you don't really understand, and unless they've got all the patience in the world, you end up fighting. In a way, they become your worst enemy. You actually begin to hate them. But then something happens, and all of a sudden they aren't there any more, and you're confused because you really miss them."

In a clogged voice, Richard said, "What kind of a woman was she?"

"That's what I want to find out," Margaret said. Her expression was now tinged with a faint wistfulness. "I've got a vague idea, but I'm sure I'm wrong about a lot of things I *think* I remember about her. I do know she was blonde and bigger than I—bigger than I am since I grew up, I mean. My father was the small, dark

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one. He was also a dirty little rat, I learned a lot later. He'd played around all the time they'd been married, and he was a bit of a crook, too. Oh, he didn't rob banks, or anything like that. He was just another sneak that lives barely on the right side of the law, that sort." She stirred, frowned, and looked at the floor again. "Mother had a pretty bad time of it all round. When they split up, she went to a rest home for a year, and I went to live with an uncle and aunt, my mother's sister. I didn't see much of her after that, and she died about five months before you and I met. My father was killed in a car smash about eighteen months before that." She continued to stare at the floor, her face drawn and mutinous.

Richard looked down at his hands, detachedly observing the hair-fine tremor there. He felt quite abominably sick. After a long pause, he said, "And you feel she should get a second chance."

"Yes, I do. Don't you, under the circumstances? Now that it's possible?"

"I see your point, of course," Richard said. He had the ghastly sensation of undertaking the most dangerous journey of his life, of balancing precariously on a verbal tightrope from which he might slip at any time unless he excercised every single nuance of control of which he was capable. "You say that after your people split up, you didn't actually see much of her. Why was that, exactly?"

"She didn't want to see me, I expect. I was always a lot like my father in looks, and I'd have reminded her of him. Something like that."

Richard said, thoughtfully, "Yes." He felt a minute improvement in his sense of balance. "I imagine it was something of the sort." He stood, wedged his hands in his trouser pockets, and took a turn around the chair. "But—" He paused, expelled air, shrugged slightly, "I mean, if that was how she felt about you then, why should she feel any different if she was to be brought back now?"

There was another lengthy, prickling silence.

Margaret said, in a thin voice, "Because circumstances are very different now."

"In what way particularly?"

"My father is dead, for one thing. He's been dead for eleven years. She'll be over him by now and she won't resent me like she used to."

"Darling, that's pure speculation," Richard said. "It's bound to be, isn't it? Look, you remember what Waker said, how he described it?" Waker had been the subject of the initial Hertzog/Spannier breakthrough, a retired janitor who had been chosen purely on the basis of his appropriate name and who had subsequently made himself a small fortune from personal appearances and ghosted articles in the press. "He said it was simply like waking up; that he hadn't been to heaven or hell or anywhere at all that he could remember. All the others have confirmed what he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said, except for that crazy Barnes woman, of course. The churches got around that one by saying that obviously none of them would remember anything of the kind because they wouldn't be allowed to, but you see what I'm getting at? If it's just like waking up, then the memory of your father will be just as strong as it was when she died." He stopped, swallowing the impatience that seethed inside him, conscious that his voice had been steadily rising.

"You're working at this very hard," Margaret said. Her own voice was still thin, and for the first time since they had met he heard a note of pure hatred in it. Even at a moment like this it still shocked him. "You're trying to convince me that if she did come back it wouldn't work, that we still wouldn't get on sufficiently well to make it worthwhile. What you don't understand is that the relationship itself isn't the really important thing. I'd want it to work, of course, but if it didn't that wouldn't mean it had all been a wasted opportunity."

"Of course it would."

"No, it wouldn't. When she found out that she had a second chance to straighten her life out—"

"How did she die?" Richard asked. He spoke coolly, suddenly sensing that a chink had shown briefly in her defenses. God, he thought, amazed, is this really I? Fencing like a swordsman ruthlessly committed to win the duel at whatever cost? He saw the flicker of wretchedness cross her face, and pressed home his instinctive attack. "Natural causes?"

When Margaret spoke, her voice was very small.

"She took pills."

"I see," Richard said. Overriding his pity, he felt a sense of tired triumph, as though the fight, although not actually over, had abruptly shown how it was to end. "Look, darling, why don't we have a drink and sit down and really talk this thing out? We seem to have got off to a pretty bad start, and I don't think—"

"No."

"No, *what?*" Richard snapped. He was horrified to find that he abruptly had a furious desire to grab and shake her, something that had never, even faintly, entered his mind before. "You mean, no, you don't want a drink, or no, you won't sit down and try to discuss it rationally?"

"How can we discuss it rationally? It's so completely basic, an instinctive, animal thing. We're fighting for our parents, both of us. Our reasons are completely different—I doubt that you even know what your real reasons *are*—but it's still—"

"Just a minute," Richard said. He was breathing heavily, conscious of the sudden heat inside him. "What do you mean about *real* reasons? You know what my reasons are, and there's nothing ambiguous about them. Yours, on the other hand, seem to me to be a straightforward examp—"

"Vanity," Margaret said. "Love of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self. My God, haven't you ever realized just how much you and Charles used to use each other as a mirror—Charles to remind himself of what he was like when he was young, and you to reassure yourself that you wouldn't have gone to pieces when you were his age? It was all perfectly understandable, rather sweet in its way, but it was pure reciprocal narcissism." She stared back at his wounded, furious face, a pale shadow of sympathy showing in her eyes. "I do understand, I really do. It wasn't only that. You really did love him, I know. He was a good man, and I've missed him, too. But, don't you see, that's what makes it so unfair? He had a good life—"

Richard said, between his teeth, "What about my mother? *She* died, too, you know. And *he* loved her."

"I know," Margaret said. She was fretful now. "I *know* he did. But he had a few good years of marriage, and afterwards he had you. My mother didn't have either. Her marriage was sour from the beginning, and all she produced was me, a permanent reminder of my father. If I'd looked like her instead, perhaps she wouldn't—"

"She would," Richard said, brutally. His head roared with an emotional compound the like of which he'd never experienced in his life before: rage, frustration, and an insane desire to hurt. He showed his teeth in a near snarl. "Once a loser, always a loser. It's the pattern of that sort of person's life. It's inherent in their make-up, the kind of limitation that's beyond your control, something that they can't grow out of. They're stuck with it, no matter how many chances they get." He turned away from her pale, slack face. "That's why it would be pointless to bring her back. I'm sorry for her, of course, sorry for you, but you know I'm right. If we were to throw away the one chance that we might get—" He was pacing like an animal now, taut, prowling steps that weaved blindly around the room. "Don't you realize just how improbable this whole thing is? It can't last. There are so many things that could go wrong that they're bound to cancel it almost as soon as it gets started. And to *waste*—"

The warning bells of instinct clamored suddenly inside him. He stopped, and spun to face her.

She was advancing on him with the brass poker, a useless relic that had provided decoration above their main thernal vent ever since moving into the apartment. Her face was ghastly, the bleached features of an animal. Hissing, she ran at him, raising the gleaming rod above her head.

He stepped sideways, snatched the poker from her with one hand, grabbed the front of her dress with the other. He jerked her to him, and then away, hurling her back across the room.

Her heel caught on a chair leg. She fell, heavily, her rigid neck striking the edge of the coffee table. The plate containing his supper jumped, scattering its contents. There was a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

final flurry of movement as she rolled onto her side, facing the wall, her back arched towards him in a belated and pointless pose of defense.

Sounds still clamored inside him, screams of horror and denial that shook him like a tree in a storm. He dropped the poker and went to her, kneeling beside her and pawing her with fearful hands, massaging the small, still breasts, seeking movement that he knew was no longer there.

After a time, he lifted her, carrying her to the bedroom and gently laying her on the bed. Holding one limp and still-cooling hand, he straightened and stood looking down at her, his face a stiff and tear-streaked mask of remorse.

He stood there for a long time, weeping and remembering.

Then, regretfully, Richard Abley made his choice.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Act of October 23, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code.) 1. Date of filing, Sept. 25, 1971. 2. Title of publication, The Magazine of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION. 3. Frequency of issue, monthly. 4. Location of known office of publication, 1 Appleton St., Holyoke, Mass. 01040. 5. Location of the headquarters of general business offices of the publishers (not printers), P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. 6. Names and addresses of publishers, editor, and managing editor; Publisher and Editor: Edward L. Ferman, P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. 7. Owner: Mercury Press, Inc. P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753, Joseph W. Ferman, P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753, Edward L. Ferman, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: none. 10. Total no. copies printed (net press run); average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 98,995; single issue nearest to filing date: 96,300. B. Paid circulation. 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 27,885. Single issue nearest to filing date 31,184. 2. Mail subscriptions: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 18,300. Single issue nearest to filing date 18,465. C. Total paid circulation. Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 46,185. Single issue nearest to filing date 49,649. D. Free distribution. Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 300. Single issue nearest to filing date 300. E. Total distribution. (Sum of C and D) Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 46,485. Single issue nearest to filing date 49,949. F. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing. Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 52,510. Single issue nearest to filing date 46,351. G. (Total (sum of E and F) Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 98,995. Single issue nearest to filing date 96,300. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Edward L. Ferman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

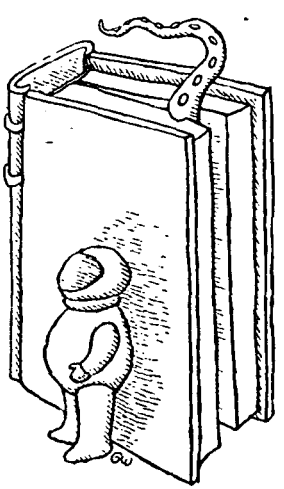
Ostensibly, R. A. Lafferty's ARRIVE AT EASTERWINE is the autobiography of somewhat less than the first year of life of a creative and self-conscious machine of enormous intelligence. The basis for its knowledge is the imprint of the personalities and memories of its makers, who are a pack of psychopaths, some of whom are said to be geniuses but who behave consistently like depraved children. The machine is given three assignments, each of which it fails to accomplish, and small wonder: one of them is an attempt to bring peace to the world by synthesizing the essence of love and spraying it over the countryside like an aerosol.

I found the book infuriating. It is obviously intended to be heavily symbolic, but symbolic of *what* is beyond my grasp. The language is raw Laffertyese, a solid mass of mixed metaphors through which it was often impossible for me to figure out what was actually going on, if anything. As in the much better FOURTH MANSIONS, there is some good Lafferty verse in the book, but the prose is self-indulgent and almost impenetrable. For one example, each chapter ends in the middle of a sentence, which is repeated and finished off as the beginning of the next chapter, apparently in order to make room for the insertion of a couplet epigraph without interrupting the narrative flow; but the trick doesn't work, primarily because what little story the book has to

JAMES BLISH

BOOKS

ARRIVE AT EASTERWINE, R. A. Lafferty, Scribner's $4.95
VECTOR FOR SEVEN, Josephine Saxton, Doubleday, $4.95
THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS, Brian W. Aldiss, Doubleday, $4.95
PLANET OF THE VOLES, Charles Platt, Putnam, $4.95
EXILED FROM EARTH, Ben Bova, Dutton, $4.95
INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1966-1970, New England Science Fiction Assoc. $5.00



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tell—insofar as Lafferty allows you to see what is going on at all—makes no sense anyhow.

My daughter says she understands the whole thing perfectly, as an allegory of a search for the truth behind the world's great religions. Somehow this explanation makes the novel no less murky to me; though I have a pronounced sympathy for the mystical novel, this one seems to have hit me right square in my blind spot.

Josephine Saxton's VECTOR FOR SEVEN is being peddled as science fiction, but it contains no sf elements except the apparitions of a flying saucer which appear to and mysteriously electrify several of the seven main characters. Instead, it is, again, a parable.

The surface story is that of seven people, all strangers to each other, who set forth together on a Super Tour—destinations unknown—run by an agency (represented by a guide) which seems to have the power to pre-manage all sorts of impossible coincidences. Part of the trip includes a jaunt to some mysterious and not very impressive ruins in Peru; another part is a shipwreck, from which they are rescued by a submarine even more luxuriously appointed than Captain Nemo's, the property of a woman spectacularly rich and beautiful, but limbless. (Clearly she Stands For something, but I have no idea what).

Nothing is ever explained. At one point the young girl of the seven leaves the party, having decided to live among the Indians in Peru; just as abruptly, she turns up later in San Francisco, pregnant, saying only that she had decided to rejoin the party. Nobody asks her any questions.

The essential part of the journey and the novel—which ends with everybody living, and one member dying, in the same house in England—is the process by which the characters come to know and love each other. In order to show this, Mrs. Saxton plays the author-omniscient, letting the reader in on everybody's thoughts, and even lecturing him upon occasion. (". . .perhaps if they had known they would have jumped off the bus screaming or would have bitten off their own tongues in order to bleed to death or they would have looked at one another merely in doubt and horror, but as they knew nothing of the future and no person on earth knows anything much about the future which accounts for the extremely low suicide rate. . ." and so on.) The climax of this technique—for in her hands it is clearly something she chose to do, not simple ignorance of more standard procedures—occurs during a long train journey across the United States, during which all seven become so close that they are dreaming each other's dreams.

All seven characters are beautifully realised, and mounting interest in them all kept me going through the dense text and the seemingly arbitrary incidents. I don't have any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG.
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

idea what it all is supposed to mean—this seems to be my month for being baffled—but if you enjoy modern-setting fantasy with brooding overtones of Kafka, you will like this.

But why *did* the original Martha of the party leave the submarine, to be replaced for the rest of the book by a younger and prettier Martha who apparently had been part of the submarine's complement up until then, but with all the old Martha's memories? Her answer is, "Better not ask too many questions." It's good advice for the book as a whole.

Brian Aldiss, like most people worth noticing, is a highly complex man, and like many writers I have known, he is a secret extrovert, a paradoxical combination of jealously guarded privacy and practiced gregariousness. The combination to some extent may account for the strong autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical tone of a lot of his mature work (we are all of us autobiographical as beginners). In THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS it has resulted in an intimate and yet simultaneously stand-offish account of one month of his intellectual and personal life, with reminiscences reaching back to his boyhood, and speculations about his own, his children's, and everybody else's future.

As an offering of insights into the thinking processes, and, remarkably often, the feelings of the man who is probably the best science-fiction writer in English today, the book is alternatingly fascinating and tantalizing. The reflections about the future—particularly a possibility which Aldiss calls "fact-free education"—gain immediacy because it is the future of his own children that he is thinking about. And in addition, about half the book is of broader historical interest because it deals with the initial impact of American sf upon the present school of British sf writers, vastly different though the individual members of the school are from each other. Need I add that it is also gracefully written?

Good non-fiction studies of sf, written from the inside, are still disgracefully rare, and the highly personal slant of this one, because it comes from one of the most important creative figures in the field, gives it an additional savour. It is sufficiently specialized so that there is unlikely to be a paperback edition, nor is the hardback likely to stay in print very long, so grab it now—and don't lend it out.

The voles of Charles Platt's PLANET OF THE VOLES are not rather engaging field mice our cats bring home with great regularity, but a race of aliens also often referred to as Volvanians; and the planet is not their home world, but one which they have annexed. The Voles are humanoid, ruled by women, and their unprovoked attacks have led humanity to breed a race of specialized warriors to fight them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'm opposed to plot summaries on principle, and telling you what this novel purports to be about would only provoke yawns and cries of "What, that again?" There isn't an original idea in the entire book, and the plot itself is full of loose ends and holes, large and small. For example, the reason why the aliens keep their human captives under drugs, but otherwise do not interfere with them in any way, turns out to be focused on the hero; this is incredible in itself, and furthermore fails entirely to explain the Vole-Earth war as a whole. For a small one, in a scene where some characters are escaping through a tunnel by the light of a single candle, the hero blows up the access end of the tunnel; the explosion deafens them all, but it doesn't blow out the candle.

The style is as dull as the plot, and there's no science content at all. I've lost the publishers' slip that came with this book, but if the recommended age level for it thereon was 10 and up, I would cross out the "and up."

EXILED FROM EARTH by Ben Bova *is* labelled a juvenile, but there's enough food for thought in it to entertain an adult, and it does not seem to be written down for its primary audience. The central proposition is: Does a world government (non-repressive) which has at last achieved population and economic stability—though at the cost of abandoning large cities to criminals and kid gangs—have the right to exile about two thousand scientists and their families in order to prevent completion of two research programs which will throw society into chaos?

Five of the novel's first eight chapters are given over to the hero's fruitless attempts to escape the round-up, which he does not yet realize involves many others beside himself. These are rather standard chase sequences, but they do give the author the chance to show both some of the on-going research, and the shape society as a whole is in. But the book doesn't really get down to business until page 73, when a full explanation of the forthcoming exile and its reasons is given.

From here on, the story does not follow the course that I expected. Instead, the hero and some of his colleagues are given a reprieve and secreted way on an island where they can continue their work. This lesser exile gradually turns into a demonstration of one of the ugly ways in which the main program (genetic engineering) could be perverted, unless the scientists themselves do something to stop it. What they do is effective, but it puts them right back where they were before—condemned to exile aboard an orbital station.

Finally, the two research programs originally involved combine to produce a third solution, which is both a plot solution and an answer to the central proposition.

The novel does not go as deeply into the social responsibilities of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scientists as does, say, Compton's THE STEEL CROCODILE, but it's rather surprising to find the problem raised at all in a juvenile. The science is all the real thing, and the writing is competent. Not an item for your permanent library, I would judge, but read it yourself before giving it to your favorite teen-ager.

Corrections

In my August 1971 column I referred to Patrick Moore as an amateur astronomer; he is a professional. I also said that Cordwainer Smith first appeared in 1958; the correct year is 1948.

In September, I said that James White was a Scot—a real howler; he is one of the best-known figures in Irish fandom.

I'm indebted to James Goddard and Bill Adams for these errata. And if anybody has any data on Cordwainer Smith, you might return the favor by sending them to Bill (not me, *not* me!) at 265 East Lake Blvd., Mahopac, N. Y. 10541.

The recently published INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1966-1970 is a supplement to the INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1951-1965. Both books offer listings by magazine, title and author; they are handsomely and sturdily produced (in hard covers). A must for any library or individual with a collection of sf periodicals. The 1966-70 index is $5.00; the earlier index is $8.00; both are available from the New England Science Fiction Association, Box G, MIT Branch Station, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

—E.L.F

EDITOR'S NOTE

We do not normally bother our readers with the problems of publishing a magazine, but we feel that it is important to make it clear to all our readers that we were far from satisfied with the quality of the printing job we received on our November and December issues and that we are working hard to correct the situation.

Many readers wrote to say that they would prefer to forgo the extra pages in the interests of better printing. We think we can and should give you both. Some improvements should be noticeable with this issue, and, as a result of new equipment and changes that are being effected as quickly as possible, more improvements will be noticeable with the February issue and thereafter.

—Edward L. Ferman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Howard Myers returns with an amusing story in which our monetary system has been whittled down to its basics. Instead of competing to make money to buy things that will impress others, one need simply earn the admiration of another to have his account credited. In short, a wide-open battle of egos, with financial rewards to the winners. Isn't that what it's all about?

All Around the Universe

by HOWARD L. MYERS

AS SOON AS I LEFT GILDALYN and returned to my own ship, I checked my financial status. Uneasily. I knew that fun and games with a choice morsel like Gildalyn was costly—it always was for me—but the question of the nanosecond was precisely *how* costly.

I admit it: I'm not the Sandman's gift to women. Not mutated or dismal or anything, but nothing special. I'm just average. The big trouble with that is that I'm not interested in dawdling with just-average girls. I'm always getting out of my class, going for the Gildalyn types.

A weakness like that can make life in this cold, cruel universe pretty frantic.

"Tell me the damage, ship," I groaned.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Rylsten?"

"My financial balance!" I snapped.

"Yes, sir. Your balance is 217 Admiration Units, sir, indicating an expenditure of 1,644 Admiration Units during the past 36 standard hours, sir."

Over sixteen hundred Admires! My mouth hung open. Why, a cost like that meant (my soul squirmed) that Gildalyn couldn't have returned as much as 10 Units! *Amused contempt!* That was all she could have felt!

"Somebody ought to kick me," I muttered.

"Shall I mock up your father, sir?" the ship suggested.

"No!"

"Then perhaps your mother, sir. A comforting word may prove more useful than a kick in amending your present mood, Mr. Rylsten."

"No! None of your damned mock-ups, ship! Look. Could the sensors in that twirl's boat be rigged to overcharge?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Absolutely not, sir," replied the ship, almost sounding offended. "The Admiration Accounting System cannot be compromised. And any exchange of more than 500 Admiration Units is automatically depth-probed and verified."

"Okay, okay," I grumbled. "Vanish."

My surroundings flickered, the way they do sometimes in an older ship—and my crate was a second-hand job—then went transparent for a dozen seconds before achieving total invisibility. I gazed about dully.

I was moseying off, arbitrary west from Abercrombie Galactic Cluster, where I'd been with Gildalyn. I tried to relax and feel at one with the beauties of nature. That's thickly clustered scape west of Abercrombie, and I don't know anywhere in the universe where the spirals are more gracefully formed. Nothing to knock your eyes out, but just attractively restful countryside.

It put me at ease, after an hour or so, and I went to sleep. When I woke ten hours later, Johncrust Cluster lay dead ahead. I felt sleep-groggy, which was an improvement.

I told the ship, "Veer south twenty degrees, and give me some breakfast. Standard menu." I had no Admiration to waste on food. And actually I was hungry enough to enjoy subsistence fare—orange pulp, ham and eggs, jelly toast and coffee—which being standard would cost me nothing.

When I finished, and had been evacuated and sanitized by the ship, I got a determined grip on myself. I had to do something about my finances.

"Tread control, ship."

"Yes, Mr. Rylsten."

I stood up and began walking. The invisible surface beneath my feet felt smooth and grassy. "One-point-five gravitation," I said.

I felt my body compress downward under the weight, and squared my shoulders against it. I hiked ahead vigorously, the ship responding to my changes of speed and direction as I strolled among the clusters, picking my path subconsciously as my mind worked on the problem at hand.

But it was no good.

The trouble was, my old sources of income were shot. I'd gotten too damned old to go running home for a handout. My old man had made that clear. As for the kids I used to planetcrawl with, back in my old home system. . .well, that had gone sour on me, too.

Time was I could breeze in to visit with the old gang, regale them with tales of the famous twirls I'd made the big scene with, and soon have them gaping (with Admiration, of course) at me. Why, once, after I met Jallie Klevillia whom *everybody's* heard about, I got two thousand Units out of the home system kids. . .and all Jallie got out of me was nine hundred. She wasn't as hot as her reputation.

But the last time I went home to hit my old chums, it didn't work. Maybe they're getting old and hard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to impress. I recall Marge Grossit gave me a cold stare and then said, "Boje Rylsten, isn't it time you settled down?"

And Harmo Jones said, "I guess *anybody* can mingle with the big beauties, if he's willing to drop a thousand Units doing it."

Would you believe I came away from that bunch of low-lifers with fewer Units than I had to start?

So, where the sand was my Admiration going to come from?

I was at a dead end. I might have no choice but what Marge Grossit suggested—settle down with some average twirl, and spend my life eating standard nine days out of ten, raising kids who *might* Admire their old man, and building interest Units with their mother.

I cringed at the thought. I'd had a taste of something better.

But my thinking was getting me no place.

"Tread control off. Gravity down," I commanded tiredly, flopping in the direction of my chair.

"Very well, Mr. Rylsten."

"Standard beer."

"Yes, sir."

I sat there, sipping the beer like a nobody. That was what I was, a nobody from a long line of nobodys. But unlike all the other Rylstens, I couldn't help *knowing* I was a nobody.

Old Uncle Buxton, for instance. All pone that guy was. I chuckled at the memory of old Uncle Buxton. When he talked, his tongue wagged his brain! By which I think I mean his brain was foolish enough to believe what his tongue said.

But in his way, he wasn't a bad old joker.

"Ship," I said, "my Uncle Buxton gave me his mock-up three years ago. I don't know if I threw it away. Check and see if you have it."

"Yes, sir, a Buxton Rylsten tape is on file."

"Okay, mock him up. And brief him. I don't want to spend an hour explaining my troubles to him."

"Yes, sir."

I had time to finish my beer before the mock-up came into the living cabin. "Hi, Uncle Buck," I greeted him.

"Hello, Boje," he responded with extended hand. "So it's been three years since you saw me, has it?"

"Sorry about that, Uncle. I've just been busy."

"I understand, Boje," he smiled. "The thing is that you called for me now, when you have a problem that requires mature wisdom and experience. I didn't give you that tape expecting to be your constant companion—you naturally prefer friends your own age."

I accepted that with a straight face. "Mature wisdom"—*hah!* If self-admiration was spelled with a capital A, old Uncle Buxton would be the richest man in the universe! The truth was that I just wanted somebody to talk to me, without getting mushy like mom's mock-up would, or hitting me with an angry sermon like dad.

"I'll give it to you straight, pal,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he said in his solemn, querulous way. "We have to face reality, and reality is harsh." He settled himself comfortably on a lounge. "Who a man is, or what a man is, don't amount to a circumcised Unit! I learned that long ago, Boje. What I'm saying, Boje, is don't expect respect. You understand?"

"I sure do," I replied. "Won't you have a beer, Uncle?"

"I'd be delighted. Now, Boje, your problem is financial. That puts you in the same boat with every honest man who ever lived. No monetary system in history has been fair to the honest man. That's what's held me back all my life. Tell me, Boje. Why do you think our system of exchange uses Admiration for currency?"

"Well," I said, "that's because Admiration is the basic desired quality. Everybody tries to get it, and that's good. It keeps the society moving. So, when science found a way to quantitize and measure Admiration, it was adopted."

Uncle Buxton was grinning knowingly. "That's what they taught you in school, isn't it, Boje?"

"Yeah."

"The trouble is, pal, there are lessons the schools don't teach," he said. "They don't breathe a hint of the real truth, which is that our system *debases* Admiration by making it the object of crass materialism. In the same way the ancients debased the beauty of their handsomest metal, gold, by making it the medium of exchange.

"But the abuse goes deeper than that, Boje," he went on ponderously. "Whether money is based on gold, on labor, or on Admiration, it always requires a man to *do* things he wouldn't otherwise do. It forces him to act against his higher instinct.

"It makes him chop up the ornaments the ancients loved and make coin out of the pieces. It makes him work when he would prefer to rest. It makes him force his personality into an Admirable mold. Isn't that true?"

"Yeah, and I can't find the right mold for myself," I said glumly.

"Right!" he said emphatically. "And I'll tell you why, Boje. It's because you're too much like me!"

I started slightly. If that was true, it was the worst bad news I'd ever heard.

"There's too much honesty in you," he explained. "You want to be what you honestly are, without abusing your better nature by acting the way the monetary system tries to force you to act! You see?"

I didn't quite see, but I nodded anyway. "Then it's what a man *does* that counts," I hazarded.

"On the button!" he applauded. "Not what he is, but what he does!" He chugged his beer and added sadly, "It wasn't always this bad. Back in the Dollar Era, there was a saying that went, 'It's not what you do, but who you are.' And another they had was, 'It's not *what* you know, but *who* you know.' That must have been a golden age, indeed. Society has degenerated."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I guess so," I agreed moodily. "But our system wouldn't be so bad if they would just change it a little. You take me. I like to Admire. Particularly I like to Admire certain twirls. Things ought to work so that I can concentrate on Admiring them, since that's what I do best, without having to try to be Admired myself. There ought to be an allowance for a guy like me. . .say one or two hundred Units per day. . ."

"Right, but the powers-that-be wouldn't listen to that for a nanosecond," he snorted. "It would compromise the Admirable Society. The aim of our whole system is to force *everybody* to be as Admirable as possible. It's slavery of the most blatant type! That's the harsh reality, Boje."

We chatted on and had some standard lunch. Then I saw that I had an embarrassing chore on my hands. How was I going to turn Uncle Buxton's mock-up off?

That had never been a problem with mom or dad. . .they were always glad enough to go back on the tape after a short visit. But Uncle Buxton had the look of a man settling in for a two-week visit. If I had the ship unmock him against his will, he wouldn't come off the tape next time in a friendly mood at all.

At last a solution occurred to me.

"Uncle Buck," I said, "I want you to enjoy the hospitality of my ship. The previous owner equipped it with twirl tapes. I guess they were best sellers in their day. Sorry I can't offer you anything current."

There was a lustful glitter in Uncle Buxton's eyes. "Well, now, Boje, that's nice of you, but your aunt may the Sandman bless her, has old-fashioned ideas. She would have my hide if I fooled around with a twirlmock."

"I don't see how she could, Uncle. You're separate from your original self that's married to Aunt Bauvila. How will she know what you do?"

Uncle Buxton snorted. "I keep forgetting I'm a mock-up. Um, well, I just might take you up, Boje. Who do you have?"

"There's Sondri Cavalo," I began, "and Dince Har—"

"Hey! I've heard of Sondri Cavalo all my life!" He broke in eagerly. "She'll do fine!"

"All right. Ship. Mock up the Cavalo twirl."

"Yes, sir," the ship responded.

When Sondri came into the cabin, I introduced her and Uncle Buxton. They hit it off right away, the way mock-ups usually do. Sometimes I think our society was made for mock-ups, instead of the other way around. They don't have to worry about Admiration since they don't participate. . .except as pieces of property. . .in the monetary system. So they can take life as they find it.

Sondri wasn't hungry, and it wasn't long before she and Uncle Buxton went off, in a cuddly embrace, to the back cabin.

"Ship?"

"Yes, sir."

"Unmock Uncle Buxton after he's had his fling and five hours of sleep."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Very well, sir."

It's what you do that counts.

That's what I had decided during my talk with Uncle Buxton. It was something I'd known all along, in the back of my mind. After all, a lot of guys *do* do things.

And I know my way around; so I knew where to go to find something to do.

"Head for Greenstable, ship," I ordered. "That's in Milky Way Galaxy, over in the old sector." A funny name for a galaxy, I'd always thought. Probably after the type of candy that originated there.

"On our way, sir."

I deep-napped most of the way, and didn't come back to full alert until we hit the Greenstable atmosphere.

That planet is somebody's good idea gone sour. Time and progress have passed it by. Its only attraction is the Greenstable Racetrack, which was quite a scene several centuries ago. It was called the "horse-racing hub of the universe"...and it is still called that, but only a handful of nuts waste Admiration on a horse nowadays.

The racetrack is still in operation, though, and is energized for mock horses and riders. Other than the track complex, the planet is just a lot of marlboro, with herds of wild horses wandering around, I guess to give an appropriate setting.

I put down on the nearly empty parking area and shuttled to the Jockey Club building. With mock jocks, the club doesn't serve its original purpose (whatever that was) any more. It's a place where guys looking for something to do contact other guys who need something done. All informal, but legal enough to stay out of trouble with Admiration Accounting.

But to look at the guys lounging inside, you'd think doing something, or wanting something done, was the most distant subject from their minds. There was always a bunch hanging around, though.

I got a beer and took a lounge near five guys talking about new-model ships. I put in a remark now and then, and finally asked, "Anything doing today?"

"Not much," one of them yawned. "It's a dull day. Jonmak's got a research thing. That's him over there. Watch out for him, though."

I knew what the warning meant, but I walked over to Jonmak anyway. I wasn't worried. He looked like somebody's idea of the ultimate twirlrave—tall, clean-cut, hawknosed, with a haughty expression—but I don't waste Admiration on such guys. I guess I'm not the jealous type.

"Jonmak? I'm Rylsten. Boje Rylsten," I said.

He gave me an old-pal grin. "Good to meet you, Rylsten."

"Same here," I replied, shaking his firm hand. "The guys tell me you're pushing a chore."

He saw that I wasn't impressed by what a great guy he was, and looked a bit sour. "Yeah. It's a bit out of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

average doer's line. Ever hear of Profanis?"

"No," I replied. "If that's a galaxy, it must be a small one. I know all the spirals."

"It's not a galaxy. It's a system."

I shrugged, as much as to say what the sand did he expect. "Where is this Profanis system?" I asked.

He grinned. "That's the chore, Rylsten. Find Profanis."

I stared at him. "That's all?"

"That's all."

"Okay," I said, "I get aboard my ship, and tell it to take me to Profanis. I let it search the tapes for the right sector and galaxy and so on. Then it takes me there. What's the chore about that?"

"The chore is that Profanis isn't on the tapes of your ship, or any other ship," said Jonmak. "Even Admiration Accounting has nothing on it."

"Then there ain't no such place."

He smirked, and peeled a sheet of plaper out of his tunic pocket. "The government doesn't agree," he said, handing me the plaper.

It was a fax of an official U.G. document, issued by the Standing Consolidation Commission of the Department of Justice:

For use of DJ agents, here is a description of the Profanis system, unlocated and unconsolidated.

The system takes its name from its principal planet, rather than from its sun, for a reason the diagram below makes plain. Note the system is abnormal and in high probability is artificial.

I looked at the diagram, which showed the craziest looking system I ever saw.

There was the planet labeled "Profanis" in the center, with about half a dozen satellites orbiting around it. One of the satellites was rayed, and was labeled "sun." The others were just ordinary moons, and their labels were meaningless symbols instead of words.

And that was all. No real sun, no other planets. I thought for a moment that the diagram was not supposed to show the whole system. Then I noticed that stars were marked in a circle around the edge of the drawing, to indicate that beyond the outermost satellite was nothing but interstellar sky.

Of course a "sun" the size and mass of a moon just doesn't exist in nature. But a moon can be fired up to burn like a sun for a few thousand years if someone wants to go to the expense. It involves setting up an anti-matter con-recon field around the object, and I don't know of anybody with enough Admires to pay for that kind of job.

Still, that was what the drawing showed: a moon fired up to serve as a sun, and in an orbit low enough, presumably, to keep the planet Profanis comfortably warm.

Below the drawing, and looking like part of the drawing instead of the text of the document, was a line that read: *"The world Profane, least blest of God's creation."*

As most everybody knows, "God" is what the Sandman used to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

called, back before the universe was explored out to the edge and the sand was discovered. Which meant that the drawing was pretty old. . .at least three thousand years. And now I noticed that the reproduced drawing showed smudges and crinkle marks. So it *was* old.

I read the rest of the document, mostly about the urgency of Profanis being found and brought into the Admirable Society. Presumably the inhabitants lacked space travel, which meant that when their goofy little "sun" burned out they would all die.

I never heard of anything so fantastic! A planet without space travel!

The document concluded:

> *Agents discovering any information concerning the Profanis system are instructed to report their findings at once. The accompanying drawing, which was found in the Astrographic Archives of Homeworld Earth, is the only source of information concerning Profanis now known. Additional data is urgently needed to expedite the early location of the system.*

I exploded, "This is crazy, man! All they have is that drawing! It doesn't have to mean *anything.* It could be out of a piece of fiction!"

Jonmak gave a hard grin. "Then what was it doing in the Astrographic Archives?" he asked.

I grimaced. He had me there.

"The government doesn't make many mistakes, pal," he added. "If they say that drawing is of a real system, you better believe it is *real.* Now, are you going to give it a try?"

I thought it over, and can't say I liked it. If the DJ agents had tried and couldn't find Profanis (and it stood to reason that they had; otherwise the government wouldn't be dealing amateur-doers in) my chances of success had to be extremely slim. Also, the guy who first said "It's a small universe" probably never had the job of locating a particular uncharted star system in it. Certainly not a system with a tiny fake "star" that would be out of detection at a quarter of a light-year!

I told Jonmak, "It doesn't sound promising, but if it's the only thing going and has a big payoff. . ."

"It does," he put into my pause. "Eight Big Ones."

Eight thousand Admires seemed like a fortune right then. "Okay, I'll try it."

He smiled like a guy who has found a doting sucker. "Great! And good luck in the hunt."

Feeling foolish, I returned to my ship. "Lift off," I said.

"Yes, sir. Where to?"

"Just off. I'll decide where later."

The ship rose through the atmosphere, picked up speed as it wiggled between the stars and out into intergalactic space.

"What's my balance now, ship?" I asked.

"Still 217 Admiration Units, sir."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I nodded, pleased. I didn't think that Jonmak had taken me for anything, but I always like to make sure. Sometimes Admiration can slip out of your subconscious without you being aware of it.

"Ship, see what you make of this," I ordered, feeding the paper about Profanis into its information bank.

After a moment the ship replied, "It is a facsimile of a document of the Universal Government's Department of Justice, specifically the Standing Consolidation Commission, concerning the unlocated and unconsolidated system of Profanis—"

"Never mind quoting it to me! I can read!" I snorted. "The point is, I've taken on the chore of locating Profanis. How do I go about it?"

"Inasmuch as such a search has doubtless been conducted by Department of Justice agents—"

"Right," I inserted.

"And inasmuch as these agents doubtless made full use of such computerized reasoning as I can offer, any avenues of procedure I might propose can be presumed to have been fully explored."

"A great help you are!" I sneered.

"On the contrary, sir," said the ship, "I fear I can be of no help at all."

"That's what I meant."

"Very well, sir."

I thought, and ate, and thought some more.

"How much would it cost," I asked at last, "to put together a system like that?"

"Depending on how many of its constituent objects were found in location, sir, the cost would run from a minimum of 16.4 billion Units. That covers essentially the expense of energizing the fourth satellite as a source of light and heat. If none of the satellites were in place—"

"Never mind. The minimum's high enough. Now tell me this: who has Admires to spend on that scale?"

"Nobody, sir. The highest personal fortune currently on record is 56 million Units. The highest corporate expendable balance is 1.3 billion Units. The highest government unaccountable expense is limited to 100 million Units by law."

"Okay," I said. "When in the past did someone have that kind of Admires?"

"Never, sir."

"Then nobody could have ever done it; so Profanis can't exist," I growled angrily. "I thought this was nonsense to begin with!"

"I did not say that, sir. You spoke of Admiration Units only. Before the Admirable Society was founded, and other mediums of exchange were in use, there was a period of some forty years when numerous fortunes of sufficient scope existed."

"Oh, yeah," I said. "You mean the Worldking Generation."

"Yes, sir."

Which was an awful long time ago. The universe wasn't fully explored then.

"Okay," I said, "how about this approach? Find out where the frontier was back then, take account

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of every factor we can think of, and figure out where a Worldking would be most likely to set up a secret planet where he could indulge his favorite sins. Does that narrow down a search area for us?"

"Perhaps, sir. It will take several minutes to correlate the data."

"Sure," I said, opening a beer. Before the drink was gone, the ship flashed a 3D map of the Home Cluster. As usual, it showed our own position with a blue dot. And there were about a dozen markings in green, scattered through seven galaxies.

"The green indicates areas of search such as you described, sir," explained the ship.

"Good. This one looks closest," I said, reaching an arm into the map to put my finger on a green patch. "We'll start with it."

"Yes, sir. Changing course for Stebbins Galaxy."

The next three days I spent filtering around as dusty a patch of backlight as I ever hope to encounter, the ship's receptors full on for any radiator that approached being right for that homemade "sun" of Profanis. It was slow, boring work, but I kept at it. And when I was sure there was no such radiator around there, I told the ship to move on to the next area.

It was bigger, and took over a week to search. My morale was beginning to slip, but I consoled myself that we were looking in the right kind of places. I never realized before just how much of the galactic areas are uninhabited by man, even in the Home Cluster where you assume people are everywhere.

But I could see that this search might take months. Naturally, I didn't want to fritter away my time to that extent.

"Look, ship," I demanded, "how do we know that the DJ agents haven't already searched these same areas, after figuring the problem the same way I did?"

"We don't know that they did not, sir," the ship replied. "In fact, the probability that we are duplicating their effort is .993, sir."

"*What?*" I roared. "Why didn't you *tell* me?"

"You did not ask, sir."

"Oh, sand," I moaned. Nearly two weeks shot! And I couldn't blame the ship. Ships have to be inhibited on information feed-out; otherwise they would talk you deaf on the slightest provocation.

"Well, I've had it with this chore," I said in disgust. "I'm going somewhere and have some fun."

"Very well, sir, but you have instructed me to advise you when your financial status is insufficient to cover an intended activity. Such is now the case, sir."

I groaned. Trapped! Me and my expensive tastes! "Damn it, I need companionship!" I complained.

"Yes, sir. May I suggest one of the mock-ups—"

"*No!* Who wants to fool with *those* things!" I wandered restlessly about the cabin. There was no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

getting away from it: I needed Admires, and this silly chore of finding Profanis was the only way I had to get them. Of course, I could go back to Greenstable and see if anything else was doing by now, but that would put me in a bad light there, quitting one chore that wasn't done to ask for an easier one.

So, I had to find Profanis.

Profanis!

"Ship, what does 'profane' mean?"

"It is essentially a negative word, sir, meaning 'not concerned with religion, not sacred.' "

"That's what I thought it meant," I said. "Okay, let's approach it from that angle, then. Check for a colonized planet that doesn't have a church."

"Very well, sir."

"Hold on! What's the probability that the DJ agents have tried that?"

"Quite high, sir—.997."

"Forget it, then!" I was in a foul frame of mind—depressed, angry, and frustrated—and I wanted a Hallypuff very badly. But smokes are non-standard fare, and wanting a Hallypuff as urgently as I did would make me Admire it just that much more.

"Oh, sand! Gimme a beer!"

For a long time I sat sipping and brooding. I still had the notion that the answer was locked up in that word "profane." The trouble was that, while I'm as religious as the next guy, I don't make a big thing out of it: I'm no expert on what is and isn't sacred.

"Ship, what's the probability on the DJ agents consulting church fathers?"

"It is approximately .992, sir."

I grunted. Evidently I didn't have an original idea in my head.

"Of course they would talk to the Pipe, then," I glummed.

"Yes, sir."

"And the hermit sandpipers?"

The ship hesitated. "The probability there is lower, sir, approximately .26. The hermit pipers are not highly regarded as authorities on questions of religion, sir."

"Well, they handle sand more than the Pipe himself. He's too busy being an organization." I hesitated over the decision, but finally got it out timidly: "Head out to the sand, and we'll hunt a hermit."

"Very well, sir."

The ship didn't change course—after all, the sand is in every direction—but speeded up. I was so scared by what I was about to do that I had the ship to untape a mocktwirl.

I didn't tell her what I was doing, but when we zipped past the last of the galactic clusters, she began to get shakier than I was; so I kissed her and put her back on tape.

"How much longer?" I asked.

"Perhaps an hour, sir," said the ship. "We are entering the area of edge phenomena now, sir."

"Okay, just don't show it to me."

"Certainly not, sir."

But even if I couldn't see what was happening to space outside the ship, I could feel it. All I could do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was lie limply, but not feeling limp. My eyes were squeezing out of my head, and my throat was coming up and out of my mouth.

Through my terror, I wondered how the first man had made it through to discover the sand. The only thing that kept me going was the knowledge that this would be over in less than an hour. The first explorer wouldn't have known that.

I thought about that for a while, and was still thinking about it when the phenomena started to let go.

"Approaching the sand, sir," announced the ship.

I sat up slowly. "Okay, I'll look at it," I managed to mumble.

The ship revealed the Sandwall stretching completely across the sky. It had a dim creamy glow (or anyway that is the way ships always show it. . .maybe it is really dark) and was featureless. I stared.

It's a strange sight to look at, and even stranger to think about. The sheer size stuns the imagination. A solid surface of stuff that englobes the whole universe like a bubble.

But it's not just a bubble, or even a wall, even if it is called the Sandwall. Maybe it goes on forever, and has other universe bubbles in it by the billions. The Pipe's pipers have probed it to a depth of five light-minutes, and the sand is still there. Just where it is in it that souls go to. . .

I shrugged. I was wasting time mooning over religious riddles. "Are we close enough to detect hermitages yet, ship?"

"Just coming into range now, sir."

"Good. Let's start searching."

The ship went into a search spiral along the surface of the Sandwall.

"A hermitage is just a ship, isn't it, pushing against the Sandwall?"

"Yes, sir."

"If I stayed in the same place all the time, I'd want something more elaborate than a ship," I mused.

"That would be difficult for a hermit sandpiper, sir. If the hermit traveled away from his stationary residence on the Sandwall, he would be unable to return to it."

"Oh? Why not?"

"He would be unable to find it, sir."

"But of course he could find. . ." I started to object, and then stopped. That surface was *big*, and featureless, and the area of edge phenomena did strange things to navigation. If a hermit took a jaunt into the inhabited part of the universe, he might come back to a point on the wall a trillion lights from where he started. He'd never find his residence.

That thought led to another, and the pit fell out of my stomach.

"How many hermit sandpipers are there, ship?"

"Slightly more than six million, sir."

Six million little ships, scattered over a surface that ran all around the universe!

"This," I said with apathetic calm, "is about as hopeless a search as trying to find Profanis by visiting every body in the universe."

"The difficulties are of similar

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

orders of magnitude, sir," the ship agreed.

"Discontinue the search and give me a Hallypuff," I said.

After a pause, the ship replied, "Very well, sir," and lifted me the reefer.

I sat smoking it, not giving a damn how many Units it might cost me. I was beaten. Sunk without a trace. The End. The last of the red-hot twirl-chasers.

I giggled and threw away the butt of my Hallypuff.

"Just two choices left, ship. Suicide or become a hermit, and I'm not high enough for suicide. Push down to the surface."

"Yes, sir."

The Sandwall moved closer. There was a slight bump as contact was made.

"We're there, sir."

"Well, open me a compartment against the wall. I can't pipe sand through your damned hull."

The ship constricted a bulkhead on the wall side, and I climbed over the lip to squat in actual contact with the Sandwall. It was so slick it felt wet, but it wasn't. I could see the sand grains just beneath the slickness, but couldn't touch them.

Nothing but thought, such as a soul or a piper's probe, could penetrate that slickness. I sat still, glared very hard at a sand grain, and concentrated.

Five minutes or an hour later I giggled and gave it up. I couldn't make a mental probe, evidently; so I couldn't pipe sand.

I climbed back over the bulkhead lip and flopped in my lounger to laugh about it.

"I can't do a *thing*, ship!" I roared merrily. "Not one universal *thing!* Isn't that remarkable?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much did that Hallypuff cost me?"

"Six Admiration Units, sir."

This startled me out of my hysterics. Just six?

But then I realized I hadn't Admired the reefer. I'd been too far overboard for that. I'd just taken it like medicine.

"I can't even go bankrupt," I said, but the hilarity was gone. "Oh, sand, sand, sand. Make a suggestion, ship."

"Your proposal to consult a hermit sandpiper had promise, sir."

"Have you gone back to counting by twos?" I yelped in disdain. "We just tried..." I shut up when it dawned on me that I had let something slip by. I nagged myself into remembering what it was. "Okay, so the hermits take trips into the inhabited universe now and then. Where should I look?"

"You might try one of the planets on which they sell their sand, sir. These are in the edge clusters, and specialize in religious tourism. The sand is purchased by novelty dealers for inclusion in sacred mementos."

"Oh, yeah," I remembered. "My great-aunt Jodylyn had one. What planet?"

"Hussbar is perhaps the most famous of the commercialized meccas, sir."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, head for it."

I found me a hermit on Hussbar, all right. He was a big guy with a noncompetitive face and a full dirty beard. I snagged him coming out of a wholesale sand dealer's offices.

"Your pardon, holiness," I said politely, "but I'm told you're a sandpiper. Could I have a word with you?"

He looked me over and said, "Sure, boy. What's on your mind?"

"This," I said, bringing out the Profanis plaper. "I'm trying to find this system. If you can provide information that will lead me to it, I will find your knowledge Admirable, sir."

He took the plaper and glanced through it.

"Sad," he mumbled. "Pitiably sad. The plight of these poor people, living in sinful ignorance."

"What poor people, holiness?"

"The inhabitants of this system, Profanis," he said.

"Oh."

"May the Sandman bless your search with success, young man, that this world may be brought to redemption," he said piously. "I regret that my meager information of the worlds of the universe can be of no help to you."

"Oh, well, that's not exactly what I expected. I want to know what is and isn't profane. In this drawing, for instance. Is there something in it that makes Profanis profane? That burning satellite, maybe?"

He stared at me. "You mean, boy, that you cannot feel the profane feature in this drawing?"

"No, holiness," I admitted meekly.

"Humpf. There isn't much sensitivity in the universe any more. Get out your pen and pad, boy."

I did so.

"Now copy the stars the way they are shown in this ring around the Profanis system."

I did that.

"What did it feel like you were drawing?" he asked.

"Just. . .just stars, with five points," I answered.

"Let's see your pad." He took it and frowned annoyedly. "You didn't get the feel of the original," he criticized. "Look at it again, and try to draw it exactly like it was originally drawn."

I shrugged and tried again with the hermit watching over my shoulder.

"That's better," he approved. "What did it feel like that time?"

I thought about it and said, "Like I was drawing a. . .a *solid*. . .a wall of stars."

"Ahah! And since human nature is, in essence, unchanging, the man who drew that sketch of the Profanis system was also drawing a wall of stars!"

"But it looks almost the same as galactic stars are always indicated around a system map," I objected.

"Almost," he agreed, "except for the *feeling.*"

"You mean the guy who drew that Profanis sketch really *thought*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there was a wall just beyond that smudgy seventh satellite?" I asked in disbelief.

"Obviously, and the implication is plain. The drawing represents the cosmogony of an isolated, ignorant society."

I nodded doubtfully. "But if they're so ignorant, how do they know their world's profane?"

"Because, being central, it is the object most distant from the starwall, which the people probably erroneously regard as the dwelling of the Sandman. . .of God, they would say."

We talked on for a while, about such things as how the people could have gotten so ignorant so soon after the planet was given its "sun" and was colonized. The hermit couldn't help with that kind of question. And the questions he did answer offered me no hint of where the system might be found.

Still, that plaper said the government wanted any additional data on Profanis, and what the hermit had told me about the starwall struck me as being worth something.

"What you've told me might prove helpful," I said, "and if it is, I'll Admire your wisdom to an extent commensurate with what I receive."

The hermit shrugged. "Forget it, boy. Admiration is of little concern to me. Go with my blessing, young man."

"M-many thanks then, holiness," I stammered, caught a bit off balance by the hermit's indifference to Admires. What a self-sufficient old jack he was!

I returned to my ship. "Where does the Standing Consolidation Commission of the Department of Justice have its office?" I asked.

"On Homeworld Earth," replied the ship.

"That's where we're going, so back to the Milky Way Galaxy," I announced gaily. "I haven't found Profanis, but I have information the Commission will probably Admire to the extent of a thousand or two Units. My 211 Units will soon have plenty of company, ship!"

"Beg pardon, sir, but your balance is now 32 Units," the ship corrected me.

"*Huh?* What happened?"

"You experienced a burst of Admiration for the hermit, sir, at the conclusion of your interview with him."

That sly old frauder! He had slicked me!

Even if the Earth system is the universe's biggest tourist hangout, I like to go there now and then.

This time I came in past Saturn, the gas giant with the rings, and slowed the ship long enough to look at it. Saturn's good for that if for nothing else.

Saturn was sticking in my mind as I dropped on toward Homeworld. Frowning, I picked up the Profanis plaper to refresh my thoughts on what I was going to tell those Consolidation guys.

And there was Saturn again!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

No. . .it was just the smudged seventh satellite in the drawing of the Profanis system. The smudge did look somewhat like a ring, badly drawn in an ink of lighter density than that used in the original.

Could it mean anything?

I shook my head. Saturn was a planet, not a satellite. And it wasn't the outermost in the system. Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, and a couple of unnamed others lay farther out.

But still. . .

I said, "Ship, don't land. Go into orbit around Earth and let me see the sky."

"Yes, sir. What amplification?"

"No amp. Let me see it like it looks."

The ship flickered and went invisible, and I stared about. A crescent Earth was below. Above were the stars, arranged in the familiar nursery constellations.

I picked out the plane of the ecliptic and had no trouble spotting the Moon, Mars, and Saturn.

"Where's Jupiter, ship?"

"Obscured by Earth at the moment, sir."

"Well, what about Uranus?"

"Here, sir." A pointer flashed on, pointing at a blank.

"I don't see it there, ship. Check yourself."

"I'm correct, sir. Uranus is too dim to be visible without magnification, sir."

"Oh. Neptune, too?"

"Yes, sir."

I grimaced. Well, here I go down another false trail, I told myself.

But the point remained that Saturn was the outermost visible object in the Earth system without using light-amp.

"Ship, let's put this in the simplest form," I said. "How many heavenly bodies could a man on Earth see, just with his eyes, that moved against the background stars?"

"Seven, sir. That includes the sun, Earth's satellite Luna, and the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn."

"Okay, did you notice the ring-like smudge on the seventh satellite?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Let's say Profanis is Earth and this drawing was made way, way back, before spaceflight or light-amp was discovered. Then light-amp comes along, some guy sees Saturn has rings, so he tries to add them to the drawing, making a messy job of it. What do you think?"

"Homeplanet Earth is not the center of the system, sir," the ship responded.

"Well, no, but would an ignorant guy eyeballing from Earth have to see that?" I argued. "He might notice that Mercury and Venus stuck close to the sun, but other than that, the sun's only difference from the other objects would be its brightness. And all the complicated planetary motions would probably snow him, anyway, and he would give up and put them all on neat, circular orbits."

"That is possible, sir. There remains the problem of the name, Profanis."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I paused in thought. What the hermit had said about the world's distance from the starwall came to mind. But maybe there was more to it than that.

"Ship," I said fervently, "if I was stuck on just one planet, Profanis would be about the least impolite name I would call it!"

There was a silence of several seconds. Then the ship said, "The probability is .992 that you have found Profanis, sir."

I just sat there for a while. My feeling of calm and confidence was new to me, and I wanted to savor it, because I didn't figure it would last.

But it did.

I'd promised myself that I'd go to Bwymeall if I ever got a real bundle; so after collecting my 8,000 Units, that's where I went. And who did I run into right away but that twirliest of all twirls, Lumise Nalence.

I grinned at her. "You're Lumise, and I'm Boje Rylsten," I said. "I've been hoping for a chance to get acquainted with you."

"How sweet of you, Boje," she replied, sticking to the formula. "I do so wish I could take the time right now, but...would you wait a moment while I check with my ship and see if my schedule's open?"

"Sure."

She hurried away to check on me. That's part of the ritual, too, as you may not know if you've never done much twirl-chasing. She wanted to see if I could afford her, and if I am the Admiring type. I didn't have a thing to worry about on either score.

And, sure enough, Lumise was back immediately, exuding eagerness and come-hither charm. "This is wonderful, Boje! It happens that I'm free for a couple of days!"

"Great!" I said.

"My ship or yours?" she asked.

"Yours. Mine's an uncomfortable old tub that I ought to trade in. Maybe I'm keeping it out of sentimentality."

We walked arm in arm toward her ship, and she gave my hand a squeeze. "I like sentimentality in a man very much, Boje."

It was a terrific two days with Lumise...although different from my earlier visits on twirls' ships in some respects. For one thing, I got the impression that Lumise was enjoying it all, not just earning my Admiration.

When I got back aboard my own bucket I said, "Let's go to Greenstable, ship. I want to find out what kind of jobs are available. The old roll must be thin."

"Very well, sir."

"How thin is the roll?"

"Your financial balance is 8,351 Units, sir."

"But...Do you mean I came out 300 Units *ahead* on Lumise Nalence?" I asked in astronishment.

"Yes, sir."

I thought it over. "Maybe self-confidence accounts for it?"

"That may be, sir."

Lumise had asked me to come back soon...had practically begged me, in fact. Well...I would come

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back, but I didn't want her to think I was just after her Units. Maybe it was time, after all, for me to think about settling down. But first I wanted to line up some interesting work to do.

PERSONAL: DO NOT FACSIM!
Office of Ninth Secretary
Standing Consolidation Commission
Department of Justice
Noram Park, Earth

Mr. and Mrs. Wardin Rylsten
Halebas West 5040-K Sector
Talleysmat, Bark., K.V.
Dear Ward and Gilta,

Your request that I take a hand with young Boje came at an opportune moment. A friend of mine in Historical Philosophy had just produced a drawing, his own brainchild, that seemed an ideal challenge to present your son. Through one of the Department's stringers on Greenstable, I was able to toss it in his lap. The problem was for him to identify Earth from a drawing of the universe as a prehistoric Earthman might have seen it.

Boje will certainly tell you about it the first time he's home; so I won't go into details. Suffice to say he solved the problem, gaining some needed mental maturity in the process. He will, I'm sure, be able to support himself amply hereafter, and make the universe his oyster.

Expenses involved, of slightly more than 8,000 Units, are covered by Admiration Development grants from the Treasury, made available through interdepartmental exchange. So you need not concern yourself about that.

And please don't bother to thank me, because I'm always glad to help old friends. If I have won your Admiration to some small extent, that will be thanks enough.

Best regards always,
Raffor Wisosborg.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here is a low key speculation on deities and Chevrolets, among other things, an interesting change of pace for Harlan Ellison, the *bete noire* of science fiction (according to the *New York Times,* anyway – and we thought all along that he was just another pretty face).

Corpse

by HARLAN ELLISON

WALKING UPTOWN AGAINST traffic on Lexington Avenue, I was already in the Seventies when I saw three young vandals ruthlessly stripping the hulk of a 1959 Pontiac someone had deserted beside a curb in front of a condemned church building. They had pried up the hood of the car with a crowbar; apparently it had rusted or been wired closed before being abandoned. And as I paced past on the opposite side of the street, they began using mallets and spikes to shatter the engine mounts. Their teeth were very white, and they appeared extraordinarily healthy, as they smiled while they worked. I presumed they would eventually sell the engine to a junk dealer.

I am a religious man. I have always been a religious man—and one would think that should count for something. Apparently it does not. I've learned to my dismay that worship is like the stock market. (Though God knows an assistant professor in Latin American literature makes hardly enough to dabble with any degree of verve.) There are winning issues and there are, of course, losers. Placing one's faith on a failing stock can be no less disastrous than placing one's faith on a down-trending deity.

Mona Sundberg frequently invites me to her buffet dinners. Why, I have no idea; we are under no illusions about each other. We are just barely friends. Tolerators is more like it.

She had promised, nonetheless, that I would meet Carlos D'Agostino. My excitement at the prospect can hardly be described. Not merely because he is certainly one of the half dozen finest prose stylists in the world today, but because the position as his translator was still

© 1972 by Harlan Ellison

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

open; and the chance of his taking me on, of living in Venice, of finally being swept out of the backwash eddy of academic ennui into the mainstream of literature, made me—quite frankly—weak in the stomach.

I had stopped at a Marboro and picked up a lovely *Orlando Furioso* with Dore engravings, remaindered at only $3.89, which I intended to present to Mona as a congratulatory gift on the occasion of her divorce, her fourth.

There was a battered hubcap lying in the middle of 71st Street, halfway down the block. It had been pressed flat by the passage of trucks, and a thin pool of water had collected in the shallow center depression. It reminded me of an Incan ceremonial saucer from the burial caves at Machu Picchu, a saucer stained dark, perhaps from blood.

Franklin Xavier (I never for a moment believed that was actually his name) was a disastrous man, and it was clear to all of us that Mona had married him solely for his connections with the Academy and its social whirl. Having tired of all three, Mona had left him and flown—God only knows why—from Basel to Minneapolis, of all places, to get her divorce. I have no idea how long one must reside in a place like Minneapolis to obtain a divorce, but at last she was back and had reopened the town house.

D'Agostino never put in an appearance. However, he did call from The Brasserie tendering his apologies. I stood quite clearly in Mona's line of sight as she spoke to him, but she never mentioned my name. The buffet was good, as usual. Excellent, really: Mona employs a marvelous caterer. I was, of course, monumentally disappointed. But I left the *Orlando;* there is, after all, a form to these gestures.

I spent the following Sunday correcting term papers. It was infinitely depressing. The suspicion has been growing in me of late that Columbia University is registering not human beings, but Chacma baboons. And they all seem to have cars. One cannot walk the streets of New York without feeling their monoxide breath filling one's lungs. The suspicion has also been growing in me that there are more cars than people in the city. Looking out across the burnished fields of parked vehicles that clog every empty space between buildings, one can hardly think otherwise. Segal came in from Connecticut to take me to the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* everyone has been raving about, and afterward we picked up his car from an indoor lot: nine floors of chrome and steel, packed fender to fender, a *building* to house automobiles. One can hardly think otherwise.

Monday, late in the afternoon, Ophelia called me into his office and closed the door very carefully and stood with his left palm pressed against it as if expecting a sudden seismic rippling to ease it open. It was an unpleasant conversation. The quality of my work is down. My

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interest is flagging. Questionnaires returned by my students indicate the level of my teaching is low. The Evaluation Committee is deeply concerned. The Appraisal Committee has sent through a reminder that my last publication was four years ago.

He never mentioned the word tenure, or the words lack of it. My contract is up for renewal in August.

He used the word *mediocrity* frequently.

I stared past his balding, liver-spotted head and watched cars on the street outside, going other places. I imagined myself a Toltec, suddenly appearing on this street of thousands of years hence, seeing for the first time these terrible shining creatures with the great glass eyes and the sleek, many-colored hides, their mouths holding grille fangs all symmetrical and burnished; and I felt my lungs fill with air as I saw the unfortunate men and women who had been swallowed by these creatures, being swept past at incredible speeds.

And I wondered why they did not seem distressed at having been swallowed whole.

When he let me go, with vague, ominous remarks about other tomorrows and other faces, I was shaking. I went back to my apartment and sat in the dark, trying not to think, only the sounds of automobile horns drifting up from the West Side Highway impinging.

On the sere grass center divider of the Grand Central Parkway, just beyond Flushing Meadow Park where the sumptuous skeletal remains of the World Fair lie stunned and useless, I saw an entire family—mother, father and three children—stripping an abandoned Chrysler Imperial. They had the seats out, leaning against the body of the car, and the oldest son was liberating the radio from the dashboard. As the father jacked up the rear end, the two little girls placed bricks under the frame, enabling the mother to remove the tires. I read the word *polyglas* in an advertisement. One can say that word several times without causing it to discharge its informational content.

They reminded me of grave robbers defiling corpses.

When I mentioned it to several of my students after the morning class, one of them handed me an ecological newspaper in which the following was noted: "In 1967 Chicago, New York and Philadelphia reported finding thirty thousand abandoned cars annually."

I felt a certain glee. So cars die as well. And are abandoned, and lie unburied; and the ghouls come like predatory birds and pick them to pieces. It helped get me through the day, that bit of information. I repeated it to Emil Kane and his wife at dinner that weekend, and they laughed politely. I've found myself thinking about cars a great deal lately. That is peculiar for me.

His wife—a woman whose cooking depresses me—particularly since she and Kane are two of my last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remaining invitations to dine—where has everyone gone?—is it my imagination or is there a mass exodus from this city?—ah, his wife, she reads a great deal. Banal left-wing publications. She added to the conversation the dull information that more American lives (she phrases it in that manner) have been taken by the automobile than by all the wars the nation has fought. I questioned the statistic. She went to a wicker flower basket where magazines were stacked, and she rummaged.

She opened one and leafed through it and pounced on a heavy-line block at the top of a page, and she showed it to me. It said about 1,750,000 persons have died as a result of automobile accidents since the vehicle was introduced. In the first nine years of the war in Indochina 40,000 Americans were killed in combat; during that same period 437,000 were killed in auto accidents—eleven times as many.

"How interesting," I said. If one is unable to buy Courvoisier, one should forcibly restrain oneself from serving strawberries Romanoff for dessert.

Seven million automobiles are discarded annually in the United States. How interesting.

I must confess to a certain contentiousness of nature. Over coffee I turned Kane's wife's liberal nature against her. "Consider," I said. She looked up from crumb-gathering with a tiny battery-powered silent butler, and smiled.

"Consider. We anguish over our maltreated minorities. The black people, those we used to feel guiltless in calling 'Negroes,' the Puerto Ricans, Amerinds (obviously the noblest of us all), Mexican-Americans—"

"We must call *them* 'Chicanos,'" Kane's wife said, thinking she had made a joke. I ignored the remark. Levity on such topics surges well into gaucherie.

"All the minorities," I persisted. "Yet we treat with utter contempt the largest minority in our society."

"Women," she said.

"Hardly," I replied. "Women have the best of all possible worlds."

She wanted to discuss it. I laid a hand against the air and stopped her. "No. Let me finish, Catherine. The automobile is the largest single minority in the country today. A larger group than males, or females, or Nisei, or under-thirty youth, or Republicans, or even the poor. In point of fact, they may even be the majority. Yet we use them as beasts of burden; we drive them into one another, wounding them; we abandon them by roadsides, unburied, unloved; we sell and trade them like Roman slave masters; we give them thought only insofar as they reflect our status."

Kane was grinning. He sensed that my argument was based more in a distaste for his wife than any genuine conviction on my part. "What's your point?"

I spread my hands. "Simply, that I find it not at all inappropriate that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they seek revenge against us. That they have only managed to kill 1,750,000 of us since 1896 when Ford first successfully tested the internal combustion engine on a horseless carriage... strikes me as a certain ineptitude on their part."

Kane laughed openly, then. "Thom, *really!*"

"Yes. Really."

"You attribute to inanimate objects a sentience that is clearly not present. I've seen you rail at Walt Disney for a good deal less anthropomorphism."

Orson Welles once performed (a bit flamboyantly, I've always felt) in a film called "Black Magic." He assumed the role of Cagliostro and mesmerized everyone with whom he came into contact. In the film, Welles had a dark, piercing stare. He looked up from under heavy brows and spoke sepulchrally. Very affecting. This was the pose I now assumed with Kane and his wife. "No anthropomorphism at all. The group mind is hardly a new concept. It occurs in insects, in certain aquatic species, even in the plant world. If—as we now believe, because of the discovery of quasars—the 'big bang' theory of the conception of the universe is correct, that it all sprang full-blown into existence—and even Hoyle has given up on the 'constantly regenerating' theory—then surely it isn't such a quantum jump in logic to assume sentience can suddenly big-bang into existence."

They just looked at me. I believe they thought I was serious.

I made my final point. "Our Neanderthal ancestors. Does not a big bang of suddenly-sparked intelligence answer the question of how we came to be sitting here? I submit that the same has happened with automobiles. A mass mind, a gestalt, if you prefer. But a society within a society. The world of the wheeled."

When I was six years old my mother developed a nasty bronchial cough. It was most strongly advised by the family physician that she go to Arizona for several months. She took me with her. I missed the keystone subjects of arithmetic during that school year, as a result. To this day, and surreptitiously of course, I still have recourse to my fingers when subtracting bank balances. For this reason I have never been interested in science or the rather tedious rigors of mathematics. I have never been able to read a text on the physical or social sciences completely. What I had said to them was the sheerest gibberish, through which holes could be punched by any first-year physics major. But Kane was a Chaucerian scholar—and he was amused by it all—while his wife was merely a fraud.

I took my leave soon after, leaving them both amazed and perplexed. The conversation had stimulated me; it had been the first gloriously bizarre sequence I had played in many months.

I decided to walk home, though the night was chill and my apartment quite a distance. I have always been a religious man.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Consider the similarities between the cultures of South America and the Mideast; similarities difficult to explain. The simultaneous presence in both cultures of the religious figure of the fish, the Gregorian calendar which parallels the stone calendars of the early Americans, the pyramid which exists in both but in no other primitive society. Is it possible that there was a link, two thousand years ago between the land of, say Judea and the land of the Aztecs? There is a story told—a fable only—of a white god who came upon the shores of the Aztecs during a period in history that would parallel the years from ages twelve to thirty during which nothing was heard of Jesus of Nazareth. They are known as the "lost" years of Jesus. The legend goes that this white man, whose like had never before been seen, went among the people and spoke of things that seemed wondrous and magical, of a kingdom of life after death. It was he, the story says, who introduced the symbol of the fish with its religious significance. Did he, as well, bring the pyramid structure and the calendar? We will never know, though historians have speculated that Jesus may well have taken passage with Phoenician sailors and found his way to the new continent. We will never know, but the legend adds one more mystery: the white prophet promised to return. And the people waited, and beat from purest gold an infinitude of gifts for his return.

Abandoned automobiles brought to a wrecking yard are first pressed flat by a stamping press. They are then stacked for the crusher. The crusher runs them down a treadmill track to a cubicle with sliding walls. They are pressed horizontally. Then the end walls move together, and the compressed remains of the automobile are squashed into a block that weighs several tons. The blocks, the cubes, are lifted by an enormously powerful electromagnet and stacked for refuse or resale. *Requiescat in pace.*

Bernal Diaz del Castillo, conquistador with Cortes, in his personal history titled "The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521," tells of being met on the beach by Indians who came bearing great gifts of gold, as though they had *expected* the arrival of the Spaniards. Cortes, now judged by history to have been a senseless butcher, began slaughtering the natives almost before the boats had beached. Castillo comments that they were unarmed, seemed, in fact, to be ready to *worship* the white men who had come from the sea. But when the Spanish massacre began, the terror-filled word went back through the jungle, up the line to the endless procession of natives carrying their golden oblations in litters, and they buried the gold along the trail and vanished back the way they had come. A conclusion can be drawn. The natives of Tabasco who came to meet Cortes were filled with awe and love for the strangers. They were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

waiting for them, to pay them homage. Only the rampaging slaughter of their kind cleared their minds of the dreams of. . .what? A white god returned as promised? We will never know.

Gold ingots and gorgeous objects of the precious metal are being found, to this day, along the jungle trails inland from the sea at Tabasco.

The cubes of squares automobiles sit in the reclamation yards through rain and Winter, through night and Resale. They do not speak. They are not expected to speak.

In August I was terminated. I took a position as a junior editor with a Latin American book publisher, far uptown on the West Side. Mona Sundberg and her paramour went off to ski in Lapland. So they said. I don't know if it is possible to ski in Lapland. Emil Kane was mugged and robbed in broad daylight on Sixth Avenue. His wife blamed niggers. Blacks, I told her, when she called to impart the news. She never called back. I have grown to understand this kind of woman.

Working quite late one evening, I found myself on Fifth Avenue, far uptown. Passing under the viaduct where the IRT 7th Avenue subway thunders aboveground, I saw a group of black, colored, Negro children smashing the windows of abandoned cars left naked under the brick structure. They were using ball-peen hammers.

If sentience suddenly sparks, and if they do, indeed, have a group mind, then they must have a society. One can hardly think otherwise. A culture. A species. A mass belief. With gods and legends and secret dreams they dream while their motors idle.

I sought no trouble with the children. They seemed capable of anything. But as I passed a dark-blue Chevrolet with its doors gone, I saw a small plastic figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the dashboard. For the first time in my life, I felt I must perform an act of senseless commitment. I felt tears in my eyes. I wanted to save the figure from the depredations of the grave robbers.

I bent over so that they might not see me as I made my way to the car, and I reached inside and grasped the white plastic form of Mary.

There was a thunderous sound. . . surely the subway train clattering overhead.

When I opened my eyes I looked out from the pillar wall of the viaduct. I could see very clearly through the bricks. The night was no lighter. The children were still at their work.

I could not speak, nor could I move. I was imprisoned in the stone. As I am.

Why, Emil Kane's wife might ask, why Thom, are you there forever in stone, eternally crypted in brick? To which I would reply, I've learned to my dismay, that worship is like the stock market. There are winning issues and there are, of course, losers. Placing one's faith on a failing stock can be no less disastrous than placing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one's faith on a down-trending deity.

He is a young God, and a jealous one. He does not like his graves robbed, the corpses of his supplicants defiled. But the children *believe*, you see; and I did not. Hardly a crime. But 'twill serve.

I am a religious man. I have always been a religious man—and one would think that should count for something.

Apparently it does not.

Back issues of F&SF

Because of a change in our warehouse, we will no longer be able to offer large quantities of back issues at a discount. Most issues (as far back as 1967) will continue to be available at $1.00 a copy. From time to time, we will offer issues of special interest at a special bargain price. For instance:

February and March 1971—Containing the complete Jack Vance serial, THE FACELESS MAN; stories by Ted Thomas, Avram Davidson, Raylyn Moore, Ron Goulart and others. $1.00 for both.

July and August 1971—Containing Roger Zelazny's novel, JACK OF SHADOWS; stories by Gene Wolfe, Larry Niven, Ben Bova, A Bertram Chandler and others. Both for $1.00

Mercury Press, Inc., Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A bittersweet Christmas story from David R. Bunch, whose stories about Moderan have recently been collected and published in book form (MODERAN, Avon).

Training Talk No. 12

by DAVID R. BUNCH

IT WAS DECEMBER NOW AND snow was feather-sliding down toward our dirty windows, like billions of bleached seed-floats sterile from some great ice tree in the sky, I sometimes thought—floating pieces of the world's great gloom-and-cold, I sometimes thought. But the air outside was full of the crisp jingle and tinkle of things, and the programs for weeks now, when I had tuned in for weather and world news, had been sneaking in a few words concerning the Terrible Thing. Little Sister at her doll beds and Little Brother at his soldiers and launch pads had turned and looked with a frighening kind of awe, and hope, at each small mention I allowed of the Terrible Thing before I could flick the knob over. Little Sister, I had to think, looked something like a starving little squirrel, her slender face and funny blunty nose poked tautly toward the hedges of her uncombed yellow hair; and Little Brother must have looked like a starving heavyweight boxer in miniature, with his fine square build and sturdy legs and bull-like mien made incongruous by the thinnness and scrawniness that started just below his neck around his collar bone and extended like a blueprint of poverty across his well-sprung ribs. I fed them enough, hell knows. But sometimes I thought they weren't happy and maybe discontent was the reason they didn't progress in flesh. But we didn't come here to be happy. NO! We came here to KNOW!

"Little Sister! Little Brother!" I yelled. "Leave off the dolls and the launch sites and come here." They came and when they were planted at attention, trembling slightly before me, I said, "No, it isn't for portraits this time. It's for training talk. And I had sought to avoid this one. Partly because it just isn't worth a training

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

talk and partly because it is so tied up with the many other lectures that I, your one remaining staunch parent, will be forced to give you, that somewhere it must all seem redundant. I really think if we could hold off on this thing until I could give you all of the other talks and you could see the whole big picture of this life-situation you'll be forced to go into, this training talk about the Jollies would be entirely beside the point. Unnecessary, I mean. But every time you hear a certain word, this awful word, or some reference to it, you both look at me. Little Sister looks at me like a squirrel looking out of dirty yellowish fall hedges, and Little Brother, you look at me as though you were remembering something. Maybe you're both remembering something. At any rate, you can see how you force my hand."

"Didn't intend it, Pop," Little Brother said. He was half past five. "I'm sure we didn't intend to do it, Daddy," Little Sister, who was somewhere after four, said.

"All right! I'll take your word for it. We won't argue it. Now, let's get on. Every year, about this time, something happens. Perhaps you have both noticed it, ever since you have been big enough to remember. And perhaps you—at least you, Little Brother—remember a time when your mother— But enough of that!" I got a firm strangle hold on an iron lump just starting to feel like a big twisted nail in my throat, almost before it even started. I hoped the kiddies hadn't noticed. Certainly I could have none of that. I coughed and blew my nose. "Hell, if it's another cold—" I said. "All right! Where were we? Oh, yes. Every year about this time something happens. Even though we stay in the house and don't go out at all, and I sit here at my easel and paint fiery pictures of summer with big droughts burning up hope, and we watch the weather and world news and have everything we need sent up to us, and you kiddies just play busily with your homemade toys all day, we'll still somehow know about this threat that's fast forming. They'll noise it in the streets, they'll cry it on the programs, and they'll even sky-halloo it from planes and drag it across us, hitched behind the lighter-than-air the big tire companies own. And in a place downtown, the biggest place downtown—I'll let you in on this, because I know from the years I used to go out—it's the same sound, and I know what's going on!—in this biggest place downtown they've got a rubber bag. It's colored all red, except for black patent and some white-fluffy tufts to make like real fur. And it's got the longest, whitest shimmer of wave-curled ersatz hairs—well, about as long as the chin crop on that old man reaping there." I pointed at the big picture of the gaunt man and the scythe I have featured on our walls. "But this thing in the place downtown is not a lean, fine harvester like that old man working there. It's silly fat, I say; it's soft. And you may not believe this,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but it's true, take my word for it—this hollow fatty bag sits there in the front window of the biggest place downtown for a full month and a half, day and night, beats two black patent lumps together on a couple of sticks it has got sticking out from a little removed from a thinned place for a neck, and it laughs about things. It goes, 'Ho! ho! ho!' I know it! I've seen it. I've heard it. I know! And sometimes when the wind is right, in latter November and almost all of December, we can hear this ogre-shape even this far laughing at us, taunting at us about how we're caught and surrounded and soon to be gulped and eaten by the soft fat dangerous Jollies coming through the air, riding in on the wind, volplaning—from EVERYWHERE! Haven't you heard that laugh? Haven't you?" They both denied it. But just then a gale-burst whipped smartly at our windows, and I'm almost sure I heard a very faint, very hollow ho-ho-ho rolling in on the wind, from toward that big place downtown.

"And what really happens when this awful thing gets going, when it firmly takes hold, in latter November and almost all of December? Not the hollow rubber monster-bag that shouts up all the Jollies and laughs at us when we're caught and surrounded, I don't mean that. I mean the thing, the threat, the event he's part of, the agitation for utter implausibility of action, for dismissing the guards and surrender!" I covered my face and my shoulders shook and knots began to form in my stomach and there was a wintry feeling of great hopelessness locked in my bowels. "God!" I said. "And I don't mean God," I said. "Because that's part of another training talk; so forget I said God," I said. "But God!" I said, "what happens? WHAT REALLY HAPPENS to everything in latter November and almost all of December?"

They could tell I was getting agitated, and I knew they feared for me, and I was sorry for them; so I said, "It's all all right, kiddies, I'll hold it down. What happens," I whispered, raspy and sick and low out of a cracking throat, "in latter November and almost all of December?" Then, quite unexpectedly, I collapsed upon the floor; and when I came back to consciousness, I was at full length looking into their scared thin faces peering down at me like poultry; and all at once I knew I would never be able to tell them enough of what I knew about the horrors of this invasion. "We'll stay inside," I said. "We'll lock all our doors until it's over," I said. "I'll paint night pictures of haystacks and the moon on fire in July. I'll have red-black monster-bags, fur-trimmed, fleeing pitchfork clouds through whirling scuds like tornadoes. I'll demolish the Jollies in a pair of black cyclones. We'll nail the windows!"

"How about the chimney?" Little Sister asked, with a noise that was a shimmering tremolo of hope, I knew, like sounds out of a whole clothesline full of little golden bells

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

might be, shaking in a great black sleety wind. "Mightn't a Jolly squeeze down through there? If it really tried? Even a big, big one all thicky-wide with a sack?"

"We'll shove the bathtub under there," I shrieked, "and keep it always full of boiling water. We'll heat flatirons and big andirons. I'll set up another interior guard; we'll take turns. And just to make sure this thing doesn't get into us, doesn't take hold of us and soften us for the invasion, we'll start wearing our earplugs again and take vows against looking out the windows. And to help out, I'll take one more trip outside for some things I'll need in my painting, and I'll try to bring back some small models of the hollow rubber ogre-bag I was telling you about being all decked in the biggest place downtown. And we'll dip these things in sooty dirty water until they're all black all over, and then I'll sketch new faces on them just above the long, waved hairs to look like scared men screaming. After that we'll practice darts at these dirty little duds until the middle of next month next year — Would you like me to do that?"

"Darts, oh boy!" Little Brother said. But Little Sister, dazed and desperate, just nodded yes at me without meaning it, and with a moist, sentimental expression that somehow told me that Little Sister's heart, no matter how much I might try it, would always be on the soft, untenable side of the Jollies. She'd buy this big deal and she'd hope; she'd see fat sacks squeezed through smallest smoke flues and cold winds alive with gold bells of Xmas, in spite of all I could say.

Have you had trouble finding F&SF on your newsstand?

From time to time, readers report that they have not been able to find F&SF on newsstands in their area. We appreciate this information; we do our best to increase coverage, and we will continue these efforts.

However, we are finding it increasingly difficult to get adequate newsstand distribution. The system is wasteful and inefficient, and it has unfortunately continued to deteriorate in recent years.

If you enjoy F&SF, may we urge you to subscribe? You'll be sure of getting your copy regularly and in advance of newsstand publication. You will also save money. Use the coupon on page 4.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A new collection of Miriam Allen deFord's stories was recently published under the title ELSEWHERE, ELSEWHEN, ELSEHOW (Walker). Her latest story concerns three men trapped in a mine cave-in. Two are rescued; the third has, incredibly, vanished. . .

Jimmy

by MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

ALL I KNOW IS WHAT I SAW AND heard. Jimmy Donalds is my own sister's only child. His pa died long ago of black lung, and there wasn't much the rest of the family could do to help Martha out, but she managed somehow till he was 18 and through high school, and then he had to go into the mine like everybody else in this town, only too grateful that Consolidated was still running.

Up to the time of the explosion Jimmy wasn't any world's wonder, but he had good sense. Since he came back, he's been—well, addled is the best way to describe it. But he wasn't the only one—at the time it happened, there was Orson Claridge and Verne Buchanan talking the same flapdoodle. Both gone now, but they never took back their story.

I'd better tell it like it happened. First there was this explosion—far from the first and I reckon far from the last. Twenty-four men got out safely, but Buchanan and Claridge and Jimmy, working together on the lowest level, was trapped. There wasn't much chance of getting them out alive, but of course we had to take it. They started drilling right away, even before they'd got the fire out on the other side.

It took five days, and they were about to give up when there was this faint tapping, and they knew at least one man was alive and waiting for rescue. And they did finally drill into the kind of pocket where they were, and got ropes around Buchanan and Claridge and hauled them up to the stretchers. They'd had five days of not quite enough air to breathe and getting worse by the minute, darkness so thick they couldn't see each other's faces, and no food and no water. Considering what they'd been through, they was in pretty fair shape, and they was carted off right away to the hospital over in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Elmerstown. The wives and mothers had been watching and praying, like always, for five days and four nights, but the men was too weak yet to do more than manage a faint smile or a feeble hand-squeeze.

Jimmy wasn't there.

I don't mean they found his corpse. He just wasn't there at all.

Martha went nearly wild, but there wasn't a thing she could do till the others were strong enough to talk. And then they clammed up, both of them. They didn't deny Jimmy had been with them—too many people knew that already. But they claimed they didn't know what had happened to them, which was pure nonsense.

My sister was a kind of excitable woman, and of course Jimmy was all she had, and her whole life. While the men were still in the hospital, she went around making all kinds of accusations and getting into the bad books of people who had been sorry for her before. The day she hinted that maybe they had killed Jimmy and eaten him, I had to step in. I told her, one more remark like that and I've have her toted to the State Hospital, and that shut her up. But the minute Orson and Verne were back home, she was haunting their doorsteps and insisting on talking to them.

Finally I guess she just wore them down. It seems they'd agreed originally not to say anything they could help, but now they had to tell that idiotic story. It made fools of them both, but what else could they do? If just one of them had experienced it—or thought he had—everybody would know he'd just been driven out of his mind, or delirious, but with both of them, each holding the other one up— Well, this is the way they told it, and you can see how much sense it made.

According to them, they realized right away what had happened. Any miner would. They knew their only chance was that the rescuers would get to them before they died of suffocation or starvation or just plain shock. It was black as pitch, and they could barely distinguish the shapes of the three of them. They moved around and talked as little as possible, to save air. But they were all there, and all in their right senses. Probably they spent most of their time prayin'.

By the second day they could begin to hear the drilling, but it was far off and slow, and no use to tap word that they were alive. They figured it would be two more days at least. And then—

Orson Claridge was always more of a talker than Verne Buchanan. After they decided between them to tell it, he was the one talked to Martha, and then afterwards to others. Nobody believed a word of it, Martha least of all. She was sure they were covering up for something dreadful that had happened to her boy. Matter of fact, I reckon most of us felt the same.

But it was the only explanation they had. And Jimmy was still missing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It was about the middle of the third day," Orson told her. "We was just settin' there, like before, tryin' to breathe easy and keep ourselves calm. Black as—blacker'n a black cat lyin' in a pool of tar.

"And then all of a sudden something happened. Right in front of our eyes, a blue light come on, in the shape of the cracks in a door that had a light behind it. It was in the face in front of us, where we knew there wasn't no door nor nothing else but stone and the coal seam.

"We stared at it, and I think Verne or Jimmy, one or the other, made some kind of an exclamation. And then while we stared, that door that wasn't there began to open.

"It opened wide, and we could see through a kind of tunnel, only the tunnel was paved with what looked like tile. It was short, and at the end of it was a short flight of steps—they looked white, like marble, but not exactly. Beyond that we could see something that seemed like a flower garden, only the flowers and leaves alike was all brown instead of green and colors. This blue light was pourin' in through, though we couldn't make out where it was comin' from.

"And standing like he had his hand on the doorknob was—well, I don't know what to say. It was like a man, and yet it wasn't. For one thing, he was naked as a bluejay—which he looked like at that; his skin was kind of bluish too. And he had hair down to his waist, like a girl—only he wasn't no girl."

I guess he meant like they say them hippies are wearing it now.

"We all looked at each other, and I suppose each of us was thinkin' the same thing—have I gone dotty or are the others seein' this too? And Verne, he cleared his throat and said, 'Yeah, I see it,' and Jimmy said, 'Me too.'

"The man, or whatever it was, didn't say nothing and didn't move. The blue light inside was castin' into the hole we were huddled in, and we could see each other and he could see us all. It must have been nearly five minutes we all stayed like that, like statues.

"Then the man spoke, in a kind of croakin' voice, but we couldn't understand a word he said. It wasn't English, and I don't know what it was. So of course we didn't answer.

"He made a move as if to shut the door on us, and Jimmy called out, 'No, don't!' If you'd ever been in the dark like us, you'd understand the way he felt—the way we all did. I don't suppose the words meant anything to the man, but he got the tone. He held the door open again. As far as I could get his expression, he looked kinda baffled, as if he didn't know what he ought to do next.

"Then he made a kind of beckonin' gesture, and Jimmy jumped to his feet and ran right up to him. We both grabbed at him to stop him, but we was stiff from sittin' and we was too late. The man let Jimmy get past where he was standin', and then he shut the door

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on us. We was back in the dark again. Without Jimmy.

"That's all I know. All we said to each other then was to try to keep our mouths shut if they got us out. You know the rest of it."

And that's the story he told, with Verne noddin' to everything he said.

There was a lot of newspaper fellers around, the way there always is in a big mine accident, and I guess one of them must have sent the story in to his paper. For a while there was a big to-do about it. Most of them thought it was funny. Once some bigwig from the State University come to town and interviewed a lot of us—did we believe it, and all that. Nobody did, except Verne and Orson. But when he asked, then where's Donalds gone? nobody had no answer.

Jimmy had vanished, and that was that, and we had to live with it somehow. Martha never did; she went all to pieces, and in the end I did have to put her in the State Hospital, and a year later she died there. For the rest, time went on and things got dimmer the way they do, and the younguns growed up and us old ones died off, and I guess most of us that had been around then and was still around had about forgotten the whole thing.

That was 16 years ago it happened. I'm getting by on my little union pension with all my kids working or married off.

Three days ago Jimmy come back.

He just come up out of the mine and walked across town like he was ending a shift. He turned up at my place when he couldn't find his mother. He doesn't look a day older. He's still 18.

But his brains are pure scrambled. He says he doesn't remember anything. He thinks he went straight through that door with the blue light, back here. He wouldn't believe that his mother was dead.

What kind of place *is* that? What kind of people live down there under the earth? What do they think and how do they feel when we dig into what must seem like next door to their world? What did they do to Jimmy—or to who else that was in one of the mine accidents and was never recovered? Or was he the only one ever, and have they been brain-washing him all these years? Nobody else that was lost ever turned up again: I don't think they could, unless they was *let*. Did they send Jimmy as a kind of signal?

Because as I sit here in the sunset on the front porch of my house, with the mine in plain sight across the town, I have an awful feeling that I'm almost seeing something.

What I'm almost seeing is a sort of cloud gathering over the mine. It isn't a real cloud. It's a queer blue, and through it you can half see what looks for all the world like soldiers with some kind of funny-lookin' weapons. . . .

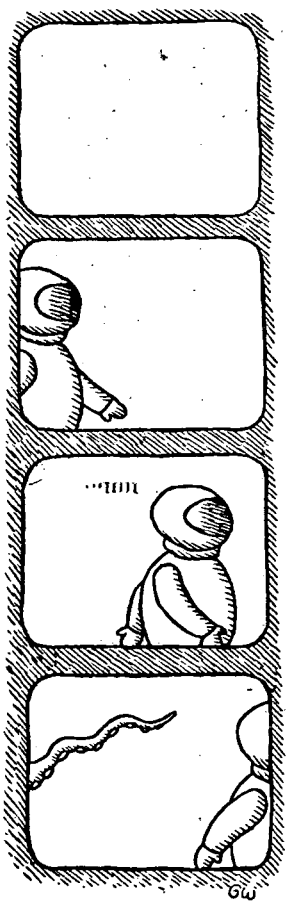
It's gettin' clearer. Don't anyone else see it? Yes—one does. Here comes Jimmy, running.

But he's running the wrong way. He's running towards them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BAIRD SEARLES

FILMS



Glen and Randa (UMC Pictures) came along just in time to save this review from being devoted to flops and reruns. It has, as the ads make abundantly clear, an after-the-bomb plot, but one with a difference. All others I've seen have either been just after the fact, concerning the struggle to survive, or long after the fact, generally with the world populated by hideous mutant thingies. In **Glen and Randa** it's about 30 years after, and the situtation has been extremely carefully extrapolated by the writers. The segment of the population we see here, a very small band in Idaho, have made no attempt to reconstruct. The over-30s are totally apathetic, the younger ones totally free of any sophistication. Like the society itself, which lives through scavenging, they have lost almost all knowledge without acquiring the rigid structure of superstition, ritual, and natural know-how that savages have found necessary to survive. Glen and Randa are a couple in their middle teens (probably) who are more like children than primitives. Glen reads, just barely; talks a little better; and wonders and thinks constantly. Randa is content to be with Glen, but talks and thinks very little. Glen is always curious about the things they find; Randa is primarily concerned with food, warmth, and sex, all of which feel good. She follows Glen when he leaves the group to find Metropolis, the wonderful city he has been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reading about in Wonder Woman Comics. They go over the mountains to the new sea, where they find an old man who has not seen another human being for 20 years, and live with him until Randa has her child; then. . .well, it's one of those endings.

Not only is the total situation well presented; there are touches throughout that really stick in the mind. We see the band scavenging a burnt out Howard Johnson's (singularly satisfying), nothing left but the scorched orange roof. Glen gets his Wonder Woman Comics from a travelling "magician," perhaps the last of the red-hot showmen, who travels on a motorcycle pulling a trailer. He gives a pathetic show for the band, with balloons, bubbles, and bull horns, accompanied by a razzle dazzle carnie pitch that is received with absolutely total lack of reaction by all of the apathetic crowd except Glen. The sight of those blank faces listening to the Stones' Time is on Our Side on a wavering phonograph is hilarious and tragic, without any obvious effort to evince either reaction. Glen and Randa take a horse with them (they think at first it's a camel, because it looks like the picture on a pack of somethings the magician had), but have no idea what to do with it; it just seemed to want to come along. They finally eat it.

As I said, this is a film with a difference. . .two differences really. Intelligence and originality. No film is cheap to make any more, but G&R was obviously very low budget. However, it doesn't look like a "cheapie"; photography is good, direction (by Jim McBride) is fine, and Steven Curry and Shelley Plimpton as G&R do a marvelous job of being childlike without being childish.

Incidentally, there is extremely graphic nudity, sex, defecation, and insect eating. If these things bother you, gird your loins and go anyway. All of them are more justified in context than any other examples I can think of, and are viewed in the film as G&R view them, i.e. as perfectly natural.

For 87 of the 89 minutes of **Let's Scare Jessica to Death** (Paramount), I was convinced that it was the old, old bit of husband and mistress combining to drive wife gaga, slightly enlivened with a red herring of a vampire lady that comes out of the local lake. This line of thought was, of course, furthered by the title. In the last two minutes, you are presented with an ending which leaves you to choose a real supernatural explanation (the only aquatic vampire on record) or that the wife has been squirrelly from the beginning and you've been watching her delusions. Neither alternative is very interesting, and I suspect that they set out to make the old plot and when finished, realized it was so tired that they tacked on an ambiguous ending to make it "contemporary." Thoroughly wasted along the way are an atmospheric score, some nice camera work, and one of the most

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unused talented actresses around, Zohra Lampert, the Cranapple Eve of TV commercials.

A theater revival (as opposed to TV) that was good to see recently was Roman Polanski's **Fearless Vampire Killers**. It was so badly edited by MGM when it opened that Polanski renounced it, but even what's left can only be described as delicious. It is, for one thing, a very funny movie, taking the classic situation of old professor and young assistant in vampire's castle, and confronting them with Jewish vampires, drunken vampires, and homosexual vampires and their collective inevitable complications, not to mention the dumbest hunchback servant on record. (Polanski himself plays the young assistant, and his repertory of gurgles, gasps, and bleats of fright is hilarious.) For another thing, it is a very beautiful film. Two scenes, the rising of the vampires from their graves in the castle cemetary, and a vampire ball with the cadaverous celebrants minueting in worm-eating, tattered costumes of past ages, are lovely visualizations of the legend.

Late, late show department... I was pleased to see the 1967 film **Privilege** come to television. The story of a near future where Church and State in England combine to manipulate a pop super star into manipulating youth into forming a Christian fascist state, it has frightening overtones, an interesting form (semi-documantary), and, again, a wealth of nice detail—even now, five years later, the costumes are just slightly bizarre enough to look like the near future. There are marvelous rock versions of Onward, Christian Soldiers and the great Anglican hymn, Jerusalem, and Paul Jones and Jean Shrimpton are indubitably the most beautiful couple ever to decorate the big or little screen.

Caught good, old **Forbidden Planet** for the Nth time around. Still the most literate and spectacularly produced space adventure film ever, I noticed two incidentals this time. One is the portentous narrator at the beginning saying, "In the middle decade of the 21st century, man reached the moon..." (talk about clouded crystal balls! Even then, mass media couldn't believe it would happen). The other is the film's resemblance to the better episodes of Star Trek, though on a grander scale, of course.

Things to come department... Douglas Trumbull, who did the special effects on **2001**, is directing a film on robots... Just about as you read this, Kubrick's **A Clockwork Orange** should be opening. I'll have a report as soon as my eye, my typer, and F&SF's printer can get it in.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hank Davis is 27 years old, has recently returned from a year in Vietnam. He has sold stories to *Analog, If* and *Orbit* and writes: "I'm fond of cats, jazz, and classical music. I've been known to build and fly model airplanes. And I'm old fashioned; I miss button-down collars."

Staying Power

by HANK DAVIS

AS SOON AS THE U.N. HELICOPTER was out of sight, something hit me on the chin: hard. I sat down on the warm sand and looked around to see whom I should run from and where I could run to, not being the heroic type. But only the girl and the desert were in view, and I hated the thought of running from the former and couldn't see any place to hide in the latter.

"That was my fault," the girl said. "I didn't mean for it to happen, but I won't say that I'm sorry." Her accent sounded English to me, but I was sure an Englishman could have heard a difference.

I checked the tip of my tongue and decided that I wouldn't have to grow a new one this time, then got back on my feet. I considered moving farther away from her, but I had been fifteen feet away when I took it on the chin. I settled for not coming any closer. "I suppose you're Jevica," I said. "Long arms you have there. Longer than they look."

"My familiar hit you. It's too quick to react to my feelings." She looked up into the sky. "Especially when they're strong feelings."

"Very strong," I said. "Eight or nine foot-pounds, at least. Good thing you didn't have any strong feelings while I was still a few hundred feet up in the air."

She might have been watching clouds, if there had been any to watch. "No danger, Mr. Rierson. As long as I'm on the ground, it's an earthbound spirit. And it wouldn't like the steel in your helicopter."

"And here I am with nothing but my brass knuckles as defense." I caught myself feeling my chin to see how much of it was left and jerked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my hand down. The action was a cliche and would have looked good in a newsreel. But, for a change, no cameras were around. Just me and the girl. And her invisible friend, who was probably the ghost of John L. Sullivan.

I followed her example and looked into the sky. It didn't make my jaw feel better. I had to say something or she might think my jaw was hurting. I tried: "Blue skies they have here in Australia."

"Very blue. Little rain in the center of the country. And they don't have many earthquakes."

That didn't leave much room for argument. I eyed her surreptitiously, keeping an innocent expression on my face. No sense in getting knocked down if her unseen guardian with the golden right—or maybe it had been a left; I had no way to differentiate—was keen about guarding his mistress's honor, even from the appraisal of dirty-minded but harmless U.N. representatives. And I could hardly represent the Untied Nations with honor if somebody the color of air kept knocking me down.

The top of her head came up to my shoulder, but my shoulder is an inch short of being six feet above the surface I stand on—sand at the moment. Her attire was practical and suitable for that sand place, being a khaki shirt and slacks and boots. Those practical clothes were embroidered with peculiar symbols, though they too might be practical. The head of that tall girl had hair, cut short as was the style, and dyed the same shade of green as her lipstick, as also was the style. Or was it dye?

After all, she was a witch.

I had appraised her and lived, so I risked another witty foray. "If I knew what was coming, maybe I could start running now instead of having to wait for a look at it. Cut me some slack."

"Transportation," she said.

"A broom built for two?"

"A helicopter. Ours."

"I thought your transparent friend didn't like metal."

"It isn't metal."

"Wood, I suppose."

"Yes."

"Uh," I said, without hesitation. I wished that she had given me three guesses to delay the shock. "I suppose you get fuel by turning water into gasoline."

"It's harder to get water than gasoline out here. But we don't have to worry about fuel rationing. That's not where you caught us." She pointed. "You should be able to see it now."

For all my looking up into the sky, I still hadn't noticed the aircraft because I had unconsciously relied on my ears. I'm not used to helicopters that can be seen before they can be heard. But this chopper barely chopped.

I watched it approach until a faint but familiar whump-whump sound of the revolving wing beating the air was audible. A few seconds later, the aircraft was settling to earth, blowing the sand into the air. I covered my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eyes with one hand and waited for the airborne dust to remember that its proper place was under my feet. I risked abrasive under my eyelids to take a sidewise glance past my hand at Jevica. Her hands were at her side. Either she had an extra, transparent set of eyelids or the familiar was making life easy for her.

Grounded, the helicopter did look to be made of wood indeed. As we walked toward it through the settling dust, I could see a slim cylinder attached to each tip of the slowing rotors. Obviously the old type, I decided, with jet engines turning the revolving wing. Then I remembered that the wing, too, was wooden, and I wondered what kept the red-hot engines from burning off.

Because the rotor was light wood, rather than heavy metal, it slowed visibly as we approached. When we were almost close enough to climb aboard, the rotation was leisurely enough for me to get a close look at the rotor tips. I stared.

"If you want to inspect them closely, we could halt them completely," Jevica said.

"I don't think I want to inspect them closely," I said. "I'm sorry I saw them at all."

The things that I had taken for jet engines were solid rods of wood, attached to the four rotor tips.

"Brooms, aren't they?" I said. "I suppose you don't need the brush at one end, since these aren't used for sweeping." She didn't answer that. "It is more comfortable, I should think."

"More stable, as well," she said. "And safer if the power fails."

People are constantly telling me things I didn't want to know. But I decided to be stoical about that revelation. Following her, I climbed into the machine, if it could be called a machine, and sat down. The seats were wooden, lacking springs, but were fortunately padded. I looked at the pilot; she looked padded, too.

I decided that I had been stoical long enough. "Fails?" I said, quickly so that my voice wouldn't crack.

"If we fly over consecrated ground," Jevica said, "the enchantment would fail until we were clear again. Should that happen, the more neutral laws of physics would be unaffected and autorotation would carry us clear."

The wooden prop, accelerating, squeaked harshly. Wood, I guessed, was hard to lubricate. The squeaking became a thin continuous scream, rising in pitch. I asked the question quickly, while we were still on the ground. "Couldn't you just avoid those spots? Make a map of them and use it for a flight plan?"

"The planet's old, Mr. Rierson. Too many places have been consecrated and then forgotten. People just don't conserve natural resources responsibly. But the danger is slight here. White men haven't done much consecrating here, and the traditions of native magic hold that magic from far away is more powerful than homemade. The helicopter was brought from Canada by ship. So, relax."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We were in the air now. I considered praying and realized that I had better not do that in *this* helicopter. I looked at the pilot, willing myself to see comforting competence at work.

She, like Jevica, wore drab khaki decorated by colorful hieroglyphics. To my untrained eyes, she seemed to be doing the usual things helicopter pilots do. The motive power might be unorthodox, but the controls looked mundane, though made mostly of wood. Glancing into a shiny, reflecting dial face, she caught me looking at her controls. "You're Rierson. You're an idiot," she said with little emotion.

I hoped *her* familiar wasn't going to pound on me. "I'm just the representative—"

"She doesn't mean *that,*" Jevica said. "You're the biggest wheel in Citizens for Sanity in Space Exploration. Your mob thinks that the only sane space flight is no space flight, period. That's why your jaw is sore."

I often run into people who are angry about CSSE (that's pronounced *cease),* but I hadn't expected to find any here. They might be witches, but they punched one of my buttons: "Pressing problems here on this planet—"

"We soon will soon show you a problem on this planet that you didn't even know existed, Mr. Rierson. Just wait."

A few hundred feet above the desert, borne on wooden, enchanted, revolving wings, I waited.

Put there by the U.N. computers, which I had formerly regarded as splendid devices. They were invaluable in an overpopulated and under-resourced world. They absorbed apparently unrelated data by the truckload and found relationships too subtle for their makers to see. They told us where we could find witches.

We might have been able to ignore that. With world population approaching the seven billion mark, an occasion which did not call for dancing in the streets even if the streets weren't crowded enough already, why worry about a few witches? But the computers indicated that they were hiding something in Australia and that it was important to world security. So, diplomatic channels were opened. To witches.

Luckily, I hadn't been tapped for the initial channeling. But luck never lasts. The witches had asked for me by name. Now I was on my way to see the big secret. In a squeaking helicopter.

We were descending, but I saw nothing of interest below. It looked like a perfect place to film a remake of *The Sheik.* I knocked, not on wood, but on the glass window I was looking through. I turned to Jevica and said, "I don't suppose that glass bothers your familiar."

"Glass is all right," she said.

We touched ground. From the air, the landing spot had looked as empty as the place we had just left. From ground level, when the clouds of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sand settled, we happened to be close to a big tent-like building which should have been as hard to miss spotting as a dinosaur in a frog pond. Witches.

We stepped down to the sand, the witch, the familiar, and I. "Strip," she said crisply.

I heard her plainly. I said "I beg your pardon" anyway.

"Clothes aren't always clothes. You'll leave yours here and wear ours."

I was very unhappy because I would have to leave my chewing gum in my pants pocket, but I decided to cooperate. Danger is my business and all that. My disrobement accomplished, I would have preferred to be the follower, but she trailed behind me. Halfway to the building, we were met by a man carrying a robe and sandals. Robed and feeling less like government-inspected beef, I was my chipper self again and started chipping. "You're a warlock, perhaps," said I to my clothier. He was dressed more like a great white hunter than Merlin or Gorice XII.

"Indeed," he said.

"This place is a regular union shop," I said.

He pulled a length of lightweight chain from his pocket, and I had a quick second's regretting to do. He looked at my face and may have seen fear in my eyes, for he smiled and said, "No danger, Mr. Rierson. Just think of this as an accessory to the outfit." Then, he looped the chain around my waist and secured it behind my back with something that clicked. He brought one free end up to my right hand, encircled my wrist with it, and added a small padlock (yes, it clicked) to keep the loop and my hand from wandering.

I tried my tether. I could swing my arm for balance while walking, or get into my right pocket, if the robe had offered one, but that was all. A thing like this could take all the fun out of bar-hopping.

Reaching for my left hand, White Hunter said, "We know you're not a Catholic, but we don't want to take chances."

Catholic? Hands? Oh.

"Why chain my left hand, too?"

"No use taking chances."

"My nose just started itching, you know."

"Sorry. Be grateful you don't have sinus trouble." He closed the third lock, stood erect and motioned toward the building. He walked toward it, single file: White Hunter in front, followed by me, followed by Jevica. The familiar might have been counting cadence too, but I had no way of knowing.

The cloth of the building exterior was covered with more symbols like the trails of mating worms. It was stretched over a framework that seemed to build from a triangle as a basic unit, like a geodesic dome. The sides curved, but the curve was incomplete, flattening suddenly. The roof might be flat or it might be nonexistent. I was wishing that the structure had not been invisible from the air. The idea of a circular wall with no roof was calling up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unpleasant memories of bull rings and Roman arenas.

We stopped before the door (wood), and White Hunter said to me, "Do you have any questions?" I considered making up some but gave a negative reply. He asked, "Have you caught your breath?" I gave that one a yes.

He tore a strip of adhesive tape from a roll and put it over my mouth.

Sinus trouble.

I was expecting to have to carry a banner with UNCLEAN stenciled on it, but White Hunter opened the door and we entered. I glanced up and saw that there was a roof. It lacked a framework, being only stretched cloth, as if they were afraid that the roof might fall on their heads. The floor was wood, as were the walls, which did not go all the way to the roof. Inside that tent building, the air was cool. I wondered whether sorcery or air-conditioning was responsible. That led to idle speculation on the matter of air-conditioners constructed entirely of wood.

We entered regions where the walls were of fabric, hanging from frames of, yes, wood. We approached such a wall, and White Hunter parted the fabric, leading me into darkness. Hearing the rustle of more fabric in front of me, I guessed that another wall had been parted. I was nudged forward, then a hand on my arm halted me. Dim light came. I could see plainly the object in the center of the room. I glanced around, looking for something more important, but the room was otherwise bare.

After the changes of helicopters and of clothing and the chaining and taping ceremonies, I was prepared to see anything, even his Infernal Lowness himself. But the object in the center of the room, though large, was just a globe of the world, and not even a very useful one. The light was not too dim for me to see that it lacked lines of longitude and latitude, or even geographical names. Even so, someone prized it and had placed it in a glass case and put a metal cage around the case.

The light faded and I was led from that dark place. The tape came off. I decided to play it cautious and not ask the reason for such a fuss over a globe. Instead, "Why the darkness?"

"Light causes chemical changes," Jevica said, leading me to another wall of fabric. On the other side, a witch new to me was waiting, seated behind a table. This one, too, was dressed like she expected the safari to leave any minute now. These witches were murder on my preconceptions: they all looked younger than I did. The new one had black hair (natural?) and a narrow face.

I was greeted, seated, and pleasant-journeyed. Then the new lady made me very unhappy.

"I am leader here, Mr. Rierson. You shall not know my real name, but for a few hours I will answer to Alista, as Jevica answers to her temporary and false name. Both should be familiar to you."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jevica happened to be the name of the wife of my boss: the Secretary-General. He also had a daughter whose name was Alista.

"The use of false names is, of course, an elementary precaution in magic," she continued. "As for the matter that must be settled now that you are aware of our existence—"

I was wondering how old she was.

"—How old do you think I am?" said she.

That was how I became very unhappy. If she knew everything that was running through my head, the jig, as we say in the business, was up. Discipline held, however, and I answered the question. I'm thirty-eight. On the basis of observation, I knocked ten years off that figure and said, "Twenty-eight." Normally, I would have taken a couple of years off the apparent age as a matter of courtesy, but I was rattled.

"You have undershot the mark, Mr. Rierson," said the one whose name wasn't really Alista. She stood up and walked to the back of the room, where a large safe stood, though I hadn't seen it when I came into the room. I wondered what sort of metal composed it and almost asked, but was told at that moment to stand up with my back to the safe. While I listened to tumblers clicking behind me, White Hunter put fresh tape on my mouth. I didn't mind standing. The unpadded wooden chair I had been sitting on felt very hard through my thin robe.

When I was permitted to turn and gingerly sit again, the table held a doll in a glass case. It was a foot high and very detailed. It was a scale model of Alista.

The original model was standing on the other side of the table. "I said you undershot the mark, Mr. Rierson. By eight hundred and sixty-five years."

I was grateful for that tape over my mouth right then, because I couldn't have thought of anything to say.

Alista lifted the glass case, handling it the way a mother handles her baby, walked to the safe, placed it inside, closed the door very carefully, and gave the dial a couple of spins. As soon as the door was closed, the tape came off my mouth. I still couldn't think of anything to say, but I was glad to have that tape off for another reason. I took two quick breaths and touched my teeth with my tongue. They felt no warmer than usual.

Alista again: "That doll does not age, and so I do not age, Mr. Rierson, but it must be protected, for any damage inflicted on it will be duplicated on my body. The techniques can be applied to models of inanimate objects, as well, such as the globe you were shown a few minutes ago."

"Anything that happens to that globe happens to the planet?" I said.

"Yes." That contralto voice just didn't *sound* eight hundred and ninety-three years old.

"Blackmail," I said.

"If necessary," she answered. "We must protect ourselves. But when the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

model of the earth was fashioned and enchanted one hundred and fifty-six years ago, we had no such thought in mind. Does the name of Samos Sertonius sound familiar to your, Mr. Rierson?" It wasn't. "That is not surprising. He was a seer of the second century and made a number of prophecies which were later proven accurate. His final prediction was that the world would end on May 9, 1831."

"Nobody remembers a prophet when he's proven wrong," I said.

"He was not wrong."

As long as the model of Alista was safe, she would neither age nor die. As long as the model of the earth was safe. . .

"Oh," I said. "I need my chewing gum," I added a second later.

"We must discuss the globe," Alista said. "The secret must be kept or every fanatic and crackpot on earth—"

"Just before I stepped from the U.N. copter, I put a new set of false teeth in my mouth," I said. "The moisture started a slow chemical reaction. That reaction has a very violent conclusion. About five minutes before they blow, they'll get warm. I was to drop them here and run, if I decided the situation called for wiping you people out. If such drastic measures weren't needed, I could damp the reaction with special chewing gum. But the gum's in my clothes, back at your wooden flying machine. The teeth aren't getting warm yet, but I'd feel safer if—"

"Go," Alista said. We went, Jevica and I.

I didn't like having my future welfare depending on a globe that a two-year-old child could kick to pieces. What if a hummingbird took a peck at New York? How long before the paint on the continents began to flake off? I was reduced to a microbe on my own scale. I wanted to run and jump and scream. I wanted to hop into bed with a certain lady of my acquaintance and forget about that globe. The certain lady was several thousand miles away, however. So I stood in the desert, with the helicopter on my right and Jevica on my left and worked on a mouthful of chewing gum.

Jevica had to put it in my mouth for me. My hands were still chained.

I chewed and she talked. "Now you see why the human race has to have space flight. The existence of the earth is dependent on that model, and sooner or later something will happen to it, even here—an earthquake, or a volcano springing up, or a meteor falling on it, or the globe will just fall apart from age. We've got to go somewhere else."

I agreed. I was ready to sign a typewritten statement of agreement with a pen dipped in my own blood. I tried to say *yes;* but with that load of chewing gum, it came out: "Ymmmpph."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It feels a bit odd to be introducing an Anthony Boucher story. That was one of his jobs during the early years of this magazine, and he was so very good at it, just a sample of the high standards he set as co-founder and editor of F&SF. Tony Boucher died in 1968, leaving many happy memories for those who knew him. He also left a few unpublished stories, and we are pleased to be able to offer one now.

The Tenderizers

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

IT WAS THE PERNOD, OF course. It must have been the Pernod.

Much though I have come to love that greenish-milky potable gold, I am forced to put the responsibility upon the Pernod, or to believe

Let me first make it clear (to myself) that I am not writing this to tell it to anyone, and above all not for sale and publication. I am simply setting this down to make it all clear to myself *(hypocrite lecteur)* and above all to convince myself that it was the Pernod.

Not when I was drinking the Pernod, certainly. Not there in the bright promenade deck bar with the colored lights behind the bottles and the bartenders playing cribbage with each other between orders and a ship's officer and a girl trying to pick our singable show tunes on the piano. But the Pernod was (well, then, the Pernods were) in me later on that isolated deck in the thick fog when the voice that I should not have recognized

To be sure, there had been queer moments before on the trip—that trip so nicely combining tourism with occasional business with editors and publishers in such a manner as to satisfy the Internal Revenue Service.

There was that room far down in the Paris Opera—Charles Garnier's masterpiece which so surpasses in opulence and eeriness even *The Phantom of the Opera.* A room that I stumbled on, that nobody seemed to visit during intermissions, a big small room that would have seemed a ballroom in a lesser edifice, where some of the walls were walls and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some were mirrors. And I walked toward a mirror and saw myself advancing toward myself and then realized that this could be no mirror. The advancing man resembled me strongly; but I was in a tourist's ordinary best dark suit and he was in white tie and tails, with a suggestion of the past *(la belle epoque?* Garnier's Second Empire?) in his ruffled shirt and elegant sash. I moved toward him, smiling to acknowledge our odd resemblance; and then I was facing myself and it was a mirror and the bell rang and in the second intermission I could not find that room.

And there was that moment in the Wakefield Tower, that part of the Tower of London which houses the Regalia of the Kings and Queens of England. I was marveling at the Stars of Africa and realizing for the first time the true magic of diamonds (which exists in those that only potentates may own) when I felt the beads of a rosary gliding between my fingers. I knew a piercing pain, and as I all but lost consciousness, I heard a grating croak of which I could make out only the words "... *aspiring blood...*" Then I was calmly looking at diamonds again and stepping back to read the plaque stating that tradition says that here the devout Henry VI was slain at his orisons in fourteen blankty-blank. With my ears still feeling the rasp of the words which Shakespeare attributed to his murderer, I prayed for his gentle soul.

And these episodes were without Pernod (brandy at the Opera, tea at the Tower), but there is no denying the Pernod (the Pernods) when I visited, late at night, the sports deck of R. M. S. *Queen Anne* in mid-Atlantic.

The deck was deserted. I like the open decks at night, in any weather save the most drenching; but the average passengers (wisely? I now wonder) huddles by the bar or the dance orchestra or the coffee-and-sandwiches or the bingo.

The deck and I were the nucleus of a cocoon of fog, opaque and almost colorless—white, one might say, in contrast to the soiled fog/smog of a city, but more of an intensely dense absence of color. Absence of form, absence of movement—a nothing that tightly enswathed.

We could be in the midst of a story by William Hope Hodgson, I thought, recalling with a pleasant shudder some of the tales by that master of horror of the sea.

I settled myself in a deck chair. Even with my eyes closed I could sense the fog pressing in, ever narrowing the limits of my little universe.

My first awareness of the other was through my nose. A lifetime of respiratory illnesses has left me with a deficient sense of smell normally roused only by, say, a fine cognac; but this was a smell that even I could notice. Prosaically, it suggested to me a badly refrigerated fish-market—which would have been horror enough for H. P. Lovecraft, who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

found (almost comically, I once thought) something profoundly horrible in the very notion of fish.

"We could be in the midst of a story by William Hope Hodgson," said a voice that I almost recognized.

I could not see him clearly, though he was sitting in the next deck chair. I started to say, "You took the words—"

"—From the same source as you," he concluded. "They used Hodgson. He was one of the first of us. Still the best, perhaps, on the sea, though I had my own touch in the air."

"Ev!" I exclaimed, and turned to him with that warmth one feels toward a colleague who is a genuine professional.

You will remember Everard Wykeham. (And to whom am I speaking? *Hypocrite ecrivain. . .)* Wrote a little for *Weird Tales* back in the Lovecraft days, then went to England and developed quite a reputation in the *Strand* and British *Argosy*. Much good general fiction, including Buchanesque adventure, but what one particularly recalls (and so vividly!) are his horror stories, perfect capsules of grisly suggestion, mostly dealing with the unsuspected and chilling implications, psychological and metaphysical, of man's flight in the air. It was true: in the domain of the horror story, the air was Wykeham's as the sea was Hodgson's; and rarely had I flown without a twinge of grue as I recalled one or another of the Wykeham stories collected as *The Arrow That Flies.*

Wykeham and I had never been intimate; but we had met occasionally at conventions or at publishers' parties and had (I think) liked and respected each other. Now he grunted a reply to my greeting and muttered, "Wish I could remember things better. I—I'm not quite all there. Nor all here either. There's a long speech by the Ghost in *Hamlet* explaining just how and why the hell he got back to . . . well, call it 'earth.' Look it up and take it for read."

"I don't think I've seen you," I said, "since *Playboy* published that beautiful chiller about—"

"I haven't much time." His voice was flat and toneless. "The Ghost puts it better but that's the trouble, you have to say so much and there just isn't time. And *you* don't remember things too damn well either, for that matter."

I paused, and then I made a speech that I have cut out of a large number of manuscripts, by myself and others. I made the half-strangled noise that is indicated by "you" followed by a dash. Like this:

"You—"

I could dimly see a nod. "Yes. Off the *Queen Anne* on her maiden voyage. Never recovered. Oh, they arrange fancy ends for some of us. Look at Ambrose Bierce. And wait till you see what they have cooked up for Ray Bradbury. But look: The glowworm gins to glimmer like the fretful porpentine or something. I have to make this clear."

There was a licorice backwash of Pernod in my mouth. I tried to play it straight. "Make what clear?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What they're doing. What they're making *us* do. Can't you see?"

I could see nothing but the cocooning fog and the shape in the next deck chair. In some kind of glimmer against all laws of optics I could sometimes catch a glimpse of the face, and it was not always Everard Wykeham's. The Wilkes Booth tragic mask of Poe was there and the arrogant white mane of Bierce. And hints of other faces, living faces that I knew and loved, the gentle-satyr glint of Theodore Sturgeon, the warm japery of Robert Bloch, the ageless eagerness of Ray Bradbury . . .

"We're all one to them," he/they/something said. "We're what they use. To often the people up and make them *fear* You can't really make people fear real things. Look at Britain under bombardment. Oh, they have used killers. They had a good run of fear in London in the 1880's and Cleveland in the 1930's. But mostly they use *us*, the writers, the ones that can suggest the unspeakable, that can put the very essence of fear, like the old boy from Eton, into a bundle of dirty linen."

"They . . ." I said slowly, and thinking of a hundred science fiction stories. "They *live* off of these—these sweats of fear?"

"I don't know. Not for sure. I think it's more like—well, an aperitif, like your Pernod. (No, I'm not mind-reading; I can smell it.) It's something that they . . . *savor.* So they let us have hints and glimpses, just a touch of the way their world impinges on ours. Where time and space are—well, not quite so disciplined as we like to think. And we use these hints and build them and—"

The fog was thicker. So was his speech, almost to being unintelligible. I caught something about the glowworm and the porpentine again, and then something about impinges and the Opera and the Tower and then the deck was silent.

Then it was as if a sudden wind roared about my head and shouted *god help me the damned thing is of such a color nervous very dreadfully nervous I am and have been a negotio perambulante in tenebris oh whistle and I'll come to you peter quint the ceremony of innocence ibi cubavit lamia now we're locked in for the night but who is that on the other side of you?*

The deck was empty. The fog had thinned to admit a moon pouring its fecund gold down on the Danae sea.

I went below.

Sometimes I think I remember words from that thick unintelligibility, words that must have been answers to questions I cannot recall asking.

"Why do we serve them even when we know? (And most of us do know.) There are so many reasons, especially for an author in middle life. The children, medical expenses, maybe the cost of a divorce—who turns down a fast check?"

And:

"Where am I now? Put 'where' in quotes. And 'when.' (See Rodgers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Hart.) And look up that Ghost speech again. And there's something in Matthew, I think. One of the parables—about the unjust steward and how it's a good idea to make friends out of wicked powers. Because . . ."

It was the Pernod. And whatever the—the Pernod said about middle-aged reasons, I shall not sell this story. I checked the parable of the unjust steward.

. . . *for they shall receive you into their everlasting dwellings.*

DHARMA

Finally, he
leaned on the
great sword,
sweat and blood
falling on sand.
The slaughtered
still screamed,
"Help me die,"
or were dead.
Dark arms and shoulders like grey stone cut through with ruby.
Sky took no notice, ocean curled and sand cut hands and feet.
Day dwindled, like strength, and the gods turned elsewhere to laugh.
He looked for
signs: clouds,
birds, shape of
tree tops in sea
wind told him
nothing. Again.
He moved, holding
his emptiness, and
mercifully killed
those who asked.
When the last died
we awoke together
and found our
new weapons
spilling men into
old sandy trenches.
But the sword still swung redly in the last rays of our sun.

—HENRY M. LITTLEFIELD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss MacLennan initially demurred offering any biographical information (except that she had a novel published by Doubleday) on the grounds that it was all too routine. She later admitted to being an instructor in Military Intelligence for two years as well as a licensed private pilot, thus recognizing her responsibility to hard-pressed blurb writers and restoring our momentarily shaken confidence in the protean capabilities of our contributors.

Good-by, Miss Patterson

by Phyllis MacLennan

MISS AGNES PATTERSON'S fifth-grade glass sat rigid under the Gorgon eye of their teacher, waiting to be programmed into the next item on their tightly organized schedule. Motionless, backs straight, hands neatly folded on their desks, faces careful masks of respectful submission, they seemed unaware that it was the last day before Easter Vacation, with school almost out and spring waiting for them beyond the open windows. The trees now lightly smudged with pink, the call of carefree birds, the rich warm smell of moist earth and new growing things seemed to hold no charm for them. Not one so much as glanced outside. Apart from discipline, there was something on the window sill that they could not bear to look at: an empty hamster cage.

The cage awaited no new occupant. It was simply there, to remind them of their failure in their nature study project—a frippery of modern education that Miss Patterson had never quite approved of. The committee appointed to care for the little beast had forgotten to take it home with them over the Christmas vacation, and their teacher, seeing in this oversight a heaven-sent opportunity for a stern lesson on Responsibility, had left the animal to the fate its thoughtless guardians had abandoned it to. When they came back after their holiday, they found it dead, lying on its back, eyes closed, mouth open, stiff and cold. Miss Patterson's vivid description of the torments the hamster must have suffered as it starved and thirsted to death had left most of the children in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hysterical tears. One thing was sure: none of them would turn his or her eyes in the direction of that reproaching cage, no matter what marvelous events might transpire beyond the window. They sat, subdued, fully under control. When their teacher cracked the whip, they would jump.

All except Corinna.

Defiant little witch Corinna! She sat in the corner like a cat wandered in on a whim, watching what went on with a cat's inscrutable smoldering stare, or turning her attention inward to mysterious thoughts of her own. She had a reputation as a troublemaker. She had been transferred from room to room all year as teacher after teacher refused to cope with her. Her parents had been called, but they refused to discuss the problem like good parents. They said that their daughter went to school because the law required it, and let the law make her behave, if it could. It was no concern of theirs.

She had been in Miss Patterson's class for little more than a week, and though she had as yet done nothing overt, in her mere presence the group was beginning to disintegrate. The children were restless, uneasy, like sheep who scent the wolf. Her contempt for the activities in which they spent their days was obvious. She refused to answer questions when called on, did no homework, turned in blank papers; and with her example before them, the others were beginning, ever so slightly, to get out of hand.

Miss Patterson was not disturbed. She had been dealing with troublemakers for twenty years, and she knew how to break them. Her methods were not subtle, but they were effective; and Corinna had put her most effective weapon to her hand by turning in an arithmetic test with nothing on it but her name. Miss Patterson returned the tests and addressed her pupils in a voice like honey on a razor's edge.

"Elephants have giant brains, and so all those who had perfect papers are elephants. Stand up, elephants, so we can see you. . . . My, we have a lot of elephants, haven't we? . . .Mice have little brains and don't pay attention, and so they make mistakes, but they can squeeze by. Stand up, mice! . . .Fleas are little tiny parasites with no brains at all. They're really stupid. We don't have any fleas in *our* class, do we? . . .Oh—we *do* have one! Corinna didn't get one single answer on this test! She couldn't answer *any* of the questions! Stand up, Corinna. You must be a very tiny flea indeed!"

She smiled triumphantly, and looked to see Corinna crushed.

"If I'm a flea, you're an old bat."

It was unthinkable that such impertinence could be. Stunned, helplessly conscious of her mouth gone slack, her burning face, Miss Patterson sat paralyzed. Transfixed by Corinna's eyes, fierce and yellow and soulless as a hawk's, she knew—how could she not have known before? How could she not have seen what she now saw so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clearly?—this was no child like other children.

"You are a bat," Corinna repeated ominously, her witch's eyes grown huge and luminous. She glided forward, reached the desk and slid around it like a snake. Behind her, suddenly aware, bonded with her, strengthening her with their united wills, the children converged on their teacher. They gathered around her desk, all of them staring. . . .

. . .Did they grow larger? Was it she who shrank? They loomed above her, glaring down with savage joy.

Agnes Patterson fluttered off her chair and scuttled away between their feet, screaming for help in a voice too shrill for human ears to hear. The children, shrieking their triumph, raced after her, chivvying her from corner to corner, striking at her as she dove past them. Help came at last, brought by the pandemonium in the room—Mr. Morgan from across the hall.

"What's going on here!"

"It's our bat!" Corinna shouted. "Our nature study bat! It got away!"

"Yes, yes!" the children chorused. "We're trying to catch it and put it back in the cage!"

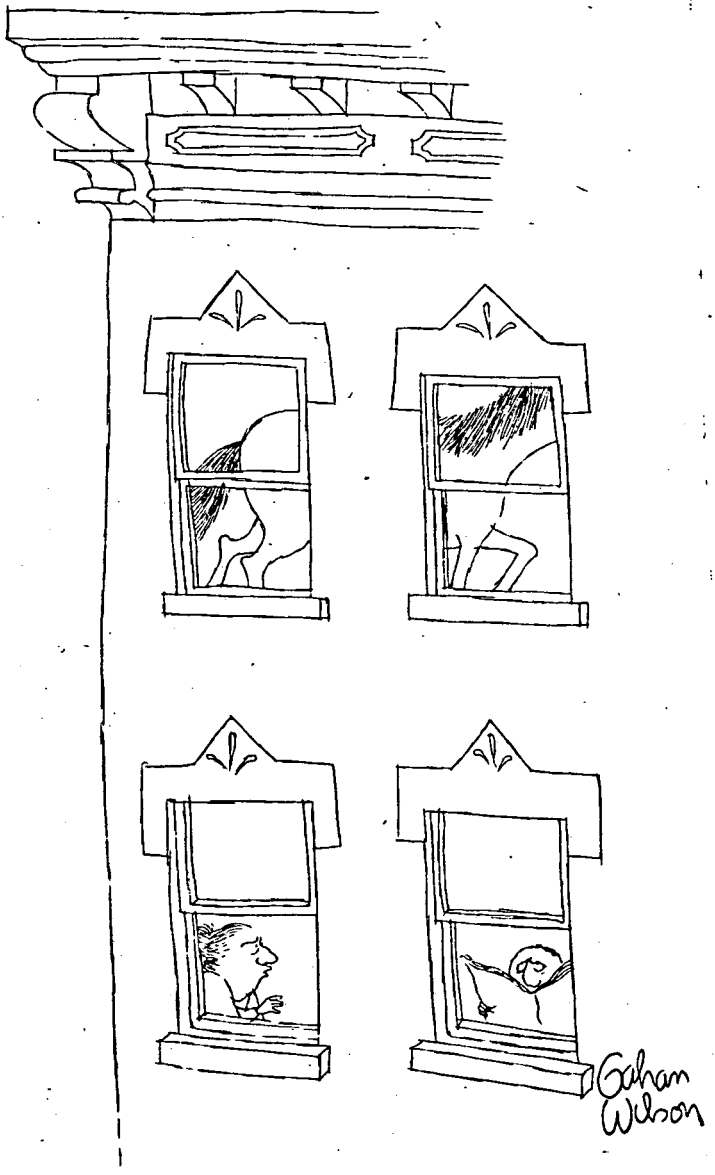
"Where's Miss Patterson? She should have told me she was stepping out so I could cover her. . . . Never mind." He pulled off his jacket, and in one deft swoop captured the hysterically chittering creature and stuffed it into the cage. He closed its door and glanced at his watch. "It's nearly time for dismissal. You kids sit quiet. I'll be keeping an eye on you from my room."

They took their places and sat until the bell rang. They said nothing aloud, but gleeful eyes met and giggles were muffled behind their hands as they gloated over the small animal huddled panting at the back of its prison. When it was time to leave, they gathered their things and left silently, in impeccable order, attracting no attention to themselves and their unsupervised classroom. Corinna waited until the others had gone. She came then and stood in front of the cage. The captive shrank still further back, but there was no move to harm her.

"Good-by, Miss Patterson," Corinna whispered. "Have a nice vacation."

She tiptoed out and closed the door behind her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"Listen. There it goes again!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This story is not, strictly speaking, either fantasy or sf, but when you come to the surprising ending, you'll see that it is very close kin. But, please, start at the beginning.

Betty

by GARY JENNINGS

"AYE, THE LASS IS NEAR HER end, she is," said Mrs. Phillips from the fireplace at the back of the millinery shop. "She should never ha' returned to Richmond this year, what with the river forever flooding and the skeeters thick as that."

"Yes, a terrible year for the city," murmured Mrs. Allan. "We stayed away the whole summer and fall, at our country place."

"So she's taken the malarial ague, as well," the little Scotswoman went on. "And her poor lungs already like rags in her breast. The pneumony is bound to come next, and that will be the finish of our Betty."

She removed a bonnet and its stand from the counter where her visitor sat and put down a cup of tea. With an air of abstraction, Mrs. Allan peeled off her fur-lined gloves and tucked them into her fur-lined muff.

"Mr. Allan is concerned," she said, "that the mother's consumption may run in the family. In the children."

Mrs. Phillips glanced at her anxiously. "Is he against your taking the lad, then?"

"Oh, no," Mrs. Allan said quickly. "Mr. Allan has met the boy, you know. He can see that the child is handsome and bright, and apparently in robust health. And he knows how much I yearn..." Her voice trailed off into a sigh.

Mrs. Phillips unobtrusively surveyed the other woman: her rich attire, her immaculate coiffure, her jeweled rings. Frances Allan was well-to-do, well-educated, well-traveled; she had probably never known a real affliction. And yet she seemed never to have known much joy, either. Her eyes held sadness, and the teacup trembled slightly in her flawlessly manicured fingers.

But she can't be a whole lot older, thought Mrs. Phillips, than the girl

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Betty lying a-wasting upstairs. And that one, who had known little else but misery, poverty and privation—she was bonny and young and full of the love of life, even on her deathbed. Well and good, Mrs. Phillips decided; if by giving up her son to this woman, Betty also bequeathed some of her own blithe spirit to the unhappy Frances Allan, then she would not be dying entirely.

"Doesn't it trouble you," Mrs. Allan asked suddenly, "to have her die here, in your house?"

"Where would ye have her dee?" flared Mrs. Phillips. "I' the cauld December streets of a cauld and heartless Richmond?"

"Oh, I meant nothing like that," the woman said placatively. "But—some of your customers were shocked when you let the room to an actress. And now, when she dies, right over the shop. . ."

"An actress she be," admitted Mrs. Phillips, "but a lady for a' that. She came to board here because, being a widow woman, she wouldna put up at the Indian Queen wi' the rest of the players. She cared aboot appearances, ye see. And when the sickness laid her low, and her wee purse was empty, could I turn her oot? I couldna! And—and be *domned* to you finicking gossips!"

Mrs. Allan smiled, patted the little old woman's clenched hand, and assured her, "I don't care a fig, either, for their hoity-toity prejudice. For one thing, I believe Betty deserves respect as a really consummate actress."

"Oh, aye?" said Mrs. Phillips, rather distantly. "I only know she must ha' been a braw staunch lassie, to be singing and dancing i' motley all oop and down the land. E'en while she was big wi' her dead hoosband's daughter."

"She once played Ophelia," confided Mrs. Allan, "to Mr. John Howard Payne's Hamlet. It isn't every actress has that honor."

Mrs. Phillips nodded solemn agreement. "Most players never have sae much as a ham *bone*." At this, Mrs. Allan had to hide for a moment behind her lifted teacup.

"I ween it must ha' been the Lord's will that fetched her here," Mrs. Phillips continued. "To the shop where ye and Mrs. Mackenzie bring your custom. So that ye both took her twa bairns to your bosoms, and now they'll not be orphans when she's gone. She'll lie peaceful, knowing that."

"Don't," said Mrs. Allan faintly. "You know very well I'm not taking little Ned just for her sake."

"An he has a home and homefolk, what difference?" Mrs. Phillips said. "If it be to your ain heart's ease, then 'tis a double blessing."

"It's just. . ." Mrs. Allan hesitated, frowning as if in pain. "I have to keep *reminding* myself that I'm sorry she's dying. . ."

Mrs. Phillips took pity, and abruptly changed the subject with, "Let us go see her, noo. She's been looking forrard all the day."

Upstairs, Mrs. Phillips rapped on the door and swung it open in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same motion. "Coompany, lass!" she crowed, with great good cheer. Mrs. Allan imperceptibly squared her shoulders, fixed a gladsome expression on her face, and swept regally into the room.

The girl, who had been hastily stuffing a soiled handkerchief under her pillow, turned in the bed with a slightly shamefaced smile. It brightened at sight of her visitor, and she said, "I would know—" but her voice was nearly inaudible. She took a deep breath and tried again, forcing heartiness into it. "I would know you if I were blind, Mrs. Allan. You always bring the fragrance of orrisroot. Mrs. Mackenzie's scent is verbena."

"Mrs. Mackenzie couldn't come today, Betty," said Mrs. Allan, smiling into the depths of the girl's superb dark-gray eyes. "But I couldn't stay away. . ." She was already turning her head as she spoke, and her questing gaze met an identical pair of dark-gray eyes on the other side of the room, where the three-year-old stood quietly by the window. "Good afternoon, Master Ned," she said. The tot replied with a bashful but impeccable bow.

His baby sister Rosalie, out of sight in the trundle bed, greeted the visitors rather more vociferously, with a wail to rival that of the winter wind outside.

"Rosie's been peevish all the day," Betty apologized to Mrs. Allan. "Hand her here, Mrs. Phillips, and I'll cuddle her awhile."

"Nay, lass," said the woman gently. "Ye'll not be wanting her to—catch your cold, noo. I'll cosset her myself."

Mrs. Allan was looking around the room. Even now, after many visits, she had to make an effort to conceal her mingled pity and distaste. By the most charitable standards, the garret could only be called squalid.

Up here under the eaves the wind crashed in sporadic gusts, rattling the one window and all four walls, and insinuating a little of its chill self each time. The feeble warmth from the single fireplace downstairs was a stranger here. The children were bundled in what appeared to be several layers of their street clothes, and Betty was, too obviously, warmed by the fire that was consuming her. She had thrown aside the thin old bed quilts, but an ember glowed in each of her cheeks, and her ivory throat and shoulders glistened with a light sheen of perspiration.

The only furniture consisted of Betty's bed, with an execrable straw mattress that crackled like a brush fire whenever she moved, the children's unpainted pine trundle bed, two crippled old chairs, an ancient theatrical trunk, and an upended crate beside the bed, on which stood a flask of cough syrup, a pewter spoon and a drip-coated bottle containing a stub of candle.

The room was barely twilit; despite the lowering gloom of the December afternoon, the candle end was being hoarded against full darkness. But now, out of deference to their distinguished guest, Mrs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Phillips juggled Rosalie on one arm and struggled with the other to strike a tinder spark for the candle.

Its sudden pulse of light flashed glints from spangles in a corner of the loft. There, neatly ranked on hangers, hung Betty's most valuable possessions—the costumes of her calling. Their glossy beads and golden threads were irremediably tarnished. Their gauzes had been often patched with common cheesecloth, and the trimmings of once-patrician lace were now pieced out with plebeian crochetwork.

Mrs. Allan's eyes came around again to the bed, and the litter of objects that covered it. Betty noted her glance and said, with a rueful little laugh, "I've been adding up my life savings. All twenty-four years' worth." Mrs. Allan couldn't help thinking, with a rush of compassion: twenty-four cents would buy it all.

As if she had overheard the thought, Betty quoted, "'They are but beggars that can count their worth. But my true love is grown to such excess. . .' Come and look," she invited. "You might want to keep some of these—mementos."

Mrs. Allan pulled out the chair from beside the bed. Then she reconsidered, determinedly put the chair back close again, and sat down shoulder to shoulder with the sick girl.

Betty said, with childish optimism, "Some of these objects are quite rare. They just might have a bit of value, someday. Here's a program from Covent Garden; it's rather an antique. And see? *Mr. and Mrs. Henry Arnold.*"

"Your parents?" asked Mrs. Allan.

"Um-hm. They were regulars in the cast there, before we emigrated to America. And here—the program of my very first Shakespearean performance. In *Richard III.* I felt very daring and wicked, donning boy's breeches."

"'The young Duke of York,'" Mrs. Allan read. "'Mistress Elizabeth Arnold.' How very sweet."

"I had thought of giving these things to Mr. Placide," mused the little actress. "So the troupe could have a sort of traveling museum of theatrical memorabilia. . ."

"Oh, no, my dear! Do let me keep them. Your children will treasure them one day."

"I hope they don't all crumble away before then," said Betty. She picked up a circlet of faded paper flowers and set it atop her raven-black hair. "Ophelia," she explained. Then the circlet's string broke, the flowers cocked down tipsily over one eye, and she giggled, "'I wear my rue with a difference.'"

The little laugh suddenly caused her to choke, but Betty waited for a gust of wind to cover the sound before she let herself cough. It was a useless camouflage; even the wild winds and the quaking of the old house could not muffle the cavernous hacking that wracked her body. Mrs. Allan and Mrs. Phillips exchanged anguished, helpless looks across her heaving shoulders, while the girl rummaged blindly beneath

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the pillow to retrieve the handkerchief and crush it to her lips.

When the wind dropped again to a sullen moan, Betty stifled the cough, neatly folded the stained cloth, and put it away. She dabbed at her watering eyes, essayed a shaky smile and said mockingly, "We ac-actors have a feeling for words. We'd set the d-dogs on a playwright who gave us a word like phthisis in dialogue. How mortifying—*that* has to be the ailment I've come down with."

Mrs. Allan willed firmness into her trembling lip and said, "Betty, I have some—news for you." She flicked her glance at the boy, meaning "not for his ears."

Betty stiffened slightly, and her face registered a sequence of emotions—bewilderment, anxiety, alarm. But Mrs. Allan waited impassively, so she turned to her son and said, "Would you like to go and play outside, Neddy?"

He shook his head.

"Well, would you like to go and visit the actor-folks over at the tavern?"

He mouthed, "No, Mama," without saying it aloud.

When Betty hesitated, Mrs. Phillips bravely cast aside her Scottish caution, and suggested, "Neddy-boy, if ye want, ye can go downstairs and dress up in yon fancy hats."

He wavered for a moment, looking with longing at his mother. But the temptation of the usually untouchable bonnets won; he turned, scampered out the door and clattered down the steps. Mrs. Phillips suppressed a martyr's sigh.

"If I had his curls," Mrs. Allan said lightly, "I'd never hide them under a bonnet."

Betty's somber gaze remained fixed on the door. "I think he knows," she said, half to herself.

"Aye, could be," Mrs. Phillips agreed. "He's a rare canny lad." She winced at the sound of a minor crash from down in the shop.

"It's not that he dreads losing me," Betty explained to Mrs. Allan. "He's brave about that. It's more like he just wants to keep me company—as long as I need him."

Mrs. Allan nodded understandingly.

"You said you have news," Betty prodded, a little fearfully. "It isn't—you haven't changed your mind about—?"

"No, indeed, dear. That is all settled. Ned will come to me, and Mrs. Mackenzie will take Rosalie." The woman impulsively put her hand on Betty's. "She'll make a good mother for your daughter, because she's already got two children of her own. And I'll be a good mother to your son—because I never had any."

Betty's hand squeezed hers. "And *Mister* Allan?" she ventured.

Mrs. Allan sought for the softest possible words. "My husband is a no-nonsense businessman, and rather strait-laced. He is determined on discipline, but he's no tyrant." She smiled suddenly and warmly. "Don't forget, Betty, Ned will be *his* first child, too."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Will you—will you be taking him with you today?"

"No, dear," said Mrs. Allan tenderly. "Both the children will stay with you until. . ."

"Until afterwards?" said Betty, matter-of-factly. "I do thank you. It will be a comfort to have them by me as long as I can."

Mrs. Allan blinked rapidly several times, then caught hold of herself to say, "The news that I wanted to tell you, Betty. You know what the feeling is, about—well, about interring stage people in consecrated ground. . ."

"Aye!" spat Mrs. Phillips, making both the other women jump. She added with deep disgust, "Contamination, they call it!"

"Oh," said Betty, as if the matter had never occurred to her. "Well, that's of little consequence."

"Wait, child," said Mrs. Allan cheerily. "Mr. Allan being a man of some influence in Richmond City, *he* has persuaded St. John's to allow you to rest in the *churchyard.*" She sat back and nodded triumphantly.

"Oh, Mrs. Allan!" Betty exclaimed joyfully. She might have been awarded, just that moment, a full reprieve by the Summoning Angel himself.

"Hoots!" added Mrs. Phillips. "Ain't that the best news ever!"

"The pastor did insist," Mrs. Allan had to say, "that your grave be situated near the wall. But, after all, it *will* be in the Episcopal Church grounds. And maybe someday we can persuade him to allow a marker."

"Dear Mrs. Allan!" Betty said, tears in her eyes and in her voice. "How can I thank such wonderful friends?"

Mrs. Allan's voice was equally husky. "You are giving me the most precious thanks you ever could give—or I could ask."

Mrs. Phillips loudly blew her nose.

"'What shall Cordelia speak?'" Betty quoted, in a reminiscent murmur. "'Love, and be silent.'" Then, briskly, she banished sentimentality. "Now! Mrs. Allan, will you take care of one last thing for me?

"You can see that I'm not leaving much of an estate," the girl said humbly. She gestured at the pitiful keepsakes scattered on the bed—the playbills, Ophelia's crumpled flowers, Ariel's stick wand with the rusty tin star. "But there are some few things I'd like handed on to my children when they're old enough. This, I'd like Rosie to have."

Mrs. Allan took the small, inlaid jewelbox and turned it over in her hands. Unthinkingly, she opened its lid. It was empty.

"I'm afraid the jewelry had to go for—for more practical things," Betty said. Then she added hurriedly, as if to disclaim any intention of boasting, "There never was *much.*"

"Rosalie will fill it someday with her own jewels," Mrs. Allan assured her.

"And these are for Ned," Betty went on. She handed over first a garishly tinted portrait miniature. She and Mrs. Allan studied it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

together. "It's not very good," Betty conceded, "but it's supposed to be me."

"It isn't half so lovely as you are," Mrs. Allan said, and meant it.

Betty next produced a small painting, a watercolor on rough paper. "I made that," she said, with shy pride.

Mrs. Allan looked at it and groped for a compliment. "It's a cityscape, isn't it?"

"The harbor at Boston, where he was born."

"And by his own mother's hand!" said Mrs. Allan. "My dear, it shall hang in his room at our house—in his lodgings at the university—and someday in his own home. I promise you."

Betty's gray eyes silently blessed the lady. Then she said, "That's all there is. I'm truly ashamed to bequeath such tawdry presents for my little ones."

"Losh, child!" said Mrs. Allan, clasping her hand again. "Presents! Why, I'm planning the grandest Christmas—" She stopped, stricken by the sudden bleakness in Betty's face.

"Christmas. . ." the girl echoed.

I meant to cheer her up, Mrs. Allan thought miserably, but I should not have mentioned it. Christmas is less than three weeks away for me and the children, but it will never come for her. And she is so very much a child herself. . .

"Christmas," Betty repeated again, in a whisper. "I should like to see that."

As if the impact of realization had chilled her, she began to shiver violently, and clutched the threadbare old bedclothes to her breast.

"Och, 'tis that wretched ague again!" exclaimed Mrs. Phillips. She hurried Rosalie back to her trundle bed—where the baby immediately resumed squalling—and came to make motherly tucking motions about Betty. "Poor lamb! I'll hie myself to the fire and brew some broth."

"I'm so s-sorry," Betty said to Mrs. Allan, through chattering teeth. "F-first I burn and then I f-freeze. If I could only m-mix the two, I'd be cozy as anything."

She tried bravely to smile, with lips that had lost all color. But the twin fever spots still shone in her cheeks, scarlet reminders of the unextinguishable cremation fire within.

"It's time I was going anyway," said Mrs. Allan. Something impelled her to bend suddenly and bestow a gentle kiss on the girl's icy forehead. "You—rest, Betty. I'll come again."

The girl gave her one last grateful look, then squeezed her eyes shut, burrowed under the covers and curled into a pathetically tiny bundle. The bed creaked to her shuddering, and the straw mattress crackled maliciously.

When Mrs. Phillips had shut the door behind them, Mrs. Allan let herself break down, and hid her face in an orris-scented handkerchief.

"I could never be an actress," she sobbed unashamedly. "If *my* heart

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was breaking, I couldn't hide it. But she. . ."

"She saves it for when she's by her lonesome," said Mrs. Phillips, snuffling herself. "D'ye think there's nae feeling in her? There's sae much she dasn't show it. Were she to let you and Mrs. Mackenzie and the childer see her sadness, would it make anything easier for any of ye? To the verra brink of the grave, she's thinking of her ain poor self last of all."

As they descended the stairs, Mrs. Allan said, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Phillips, but I cannot—I cannot—go through this again, or I'll give way in front of her. I mustn't come again until—until it's time to come for the boy."

"Aweel, ye saw—it canna be long, noo. I'll send a messenger when 'tis time. Hist noo, the lad is playing i' the shop. Ye'll not let him see ye weeping."

Mrs. Allan said affectionate good-bys to the woman and the boy, and departed into the bitter winter evening. She kept her head down, bucking breathlessly against the wind, as she made her way down Main Street. When she turned into 14th Street, she found the going a little easier. She raised her head, and realized that she was passing the two-story frame building that housed the theater.

Its facade was lavishly plastered with bills advertising the presence and merits of Mr. Placide's "Virginia Players."

One of the posters caught Mrs. Allan's attention. Half torn away by the wind, it was fluttering like a signal of distress.

TO THE HUMANE HEART

On this night *Mrs. Poe,* lingering on the bed of disease and surrounded by her children, asks your assistance, and asks it perhaps for the last time.

The generosity of the *Richmond Audience* can need no other appeal to—

"Beg your pardon, missis," said a timid voice. Mrs. Allan turned, and a small, shabby man touched his hatbrim to her. The complexion of his face, pale-orange from a lifetime of make-up, identified him as one of the Placide troupe.

"That there benefit pufformance has bin called off," he told her. "Missis Poe is jist too poorly to go on stage. But if so be you'd care to contribit the price of admission. . ." He took off the hat and held it out, crown downward. ". . .I'll see she gits it."

Mrs. Allan, her eyes stung to weeping again by the wind, nodded wordlessly and fumbled in the pocket of her muff.

"Mrs. Allan is *so* good," said Betty, between listless sips of the hot bouillon Mrs. Phillips was spooning into her.

"Aye," said that lady. "Ye couldna wish for a better foster mother for your bairn."

Betty looked across the room at her son. Playing with her "Juliet" nightgown, he had tangled it and himself into a knot, and now he was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gurgling with laughter as he struggled to get loose of it.

"I do hope she'll not let Mr. Allan be overstrict," said Betty, and smiled adoringly at the boy. "My little Edgar is such a *happy* child."

Elizabeth Arnold Poe
b.1787
London, England
d. December 8, 1811
Richmond, Virginia
Aged 24 years

(This story is true. *In memoriam.*—G.J.)

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS ON THE MOVE

Will you put yourself in the place of a copy of F&SF for a moment? A copy that is mailed to your home, only to find that you have moved. Is it forwarded to you? *No.* Is it returned to us? *No.* Instead, a post office regulation decrees that it must be. . .thrown away! We are notified of this grim procedure and charged ten cents for each notification. Multiply this aimless ending by hundreds each month and we have a doubly sad story: copies that do nobody any good, and a considerable waste of money to us, money which we would must prefer to spend on new stories. With your help, this situation can be changed. *If you are planning a change of address, please notify us six weeks in advance. If possible, enclose a label from a recent issue, and be sure to give us both your old and new address, including the zip codes.*

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE, MERCURY PRESS, Inc., P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The 3 - D Molecule

ISAAC ASIMOV

SCIENCE

IN THE DAYS WHEN I WAS actively teaching full-time at a medical school, there was always the psychological difficulty of facing a sullen audience. The students had come to school to study medicine. They wanted white coats, a stethoscope, a tongue depressor, and a prescription pad.

Instead, they found that for the first two years (at least, as it was in the days when I was actively teaching) they were subjected to the "basic sciences." That meant they had to listen to lectures very much in the style of those they had suffered through in college.

Some of those basic sciences had, at least, a clear connection with what they recognized as the doctor-business, especially anatomy where they had all the fun of slicing up cadavers. Of all the basic sciences, though, the one that seemed least immediately "relevant," furthest removed from the game of doctor-and-patient, most abstract, most collegiate, and most saturated with despised Ph.D.'s as professors was biochemistry. —And, of course, it was biochemistry that I taught.

I tried various means of counteracting the natural contempt of medical student for biochemistry. The device which worked best (or, at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

least, gave me most pleasure) was to launch into a spirited account of "the greatest single discovery in all the history of medicine"—that is, the germ theory of disease. I can get very dramatic when pushed, and I would build up the discovery and its consequences to the loftiest possible pinnacle.

And then I would say, "But, of course, as you probably all take for granted, no mere physician could so fundamentally revolutionize medicine. The discoverer was Louis Pasteur, Ph.D., a biochemist."

Pasteur's first great discovery, however, had nothing to do with medicine, but was a matter of straight chemistry. It involved the matter of optically-active substances, a subject I discussed last month. To see how he contributed, let's start at the beginning.

In the wine-making process of the fermentation of grape juice, a sludgy substance separates and is called "tartar," a word of unknown origin. From this substance, the Swedish chemist Karl Wilhelm Scheele, in 1769, isolated a compound that had acid properties. He naturally called it "tartaric acid."

In itself this wasn't terribly important, but then in 1820, a German manufacturer of chemicals, Charles Kestner, prepared something he felt ought to be tartaric acid and yet didn't seem to be. For one thing it was distinctly less soluble than tartaric acid. A number of chemists obtained samples and studied it curiously. Eventually, the French chemist, Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac, named this substance "racemic acid" from the Latin word for a "cluster of grapes."

The more closely racemic acid and tartaric acid were studied, the more puzzling were the differences in properties. Analysis showed that each acid had exactly the same proportion of exactly the same elements in their molelcules. Using modern symbols, the formula for each was $C_4H_6O_6$.

In the early 19th Century, when the atomic theory had only been in existence for a quarter of a century or so, chemists had decided that every different molecule had a different atomic content; that it was, in fact, the difference of atomic content that was responsible for the difference of properties. Yet here were two substances, quite distinguishable, with molecules made up of the same proportions of the same elements. It was very disturbing, especially since this was *not* the first time such a thing had been reported.

In 1830, the staunchly conservative Swedish chemist, Jons Jakob Berzelius*, who didn't believe that molecules with equal structures but

**I have a tendency (as you may occasionally have noticed) to mention large numbers of scientists and to give the contribution of each whenever I get science-historical. This is not a matter of name-dropping. Every advance in science is the result of the cooperative labor of a number of people, and I like to demonstrate that. And I am careful to mention nationalities because it is also important to recognize the fact that science is international in scope.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different properties were possible, examined both tartaric acid and racemic acid in detail. With considerable chagrin, he decided that even though he didn't believe it, it was nevertheless so. He bowed to the necessary, accepted the finding, and called such equal-structure-different-property compounds "isomers" from Greek words meaning "equal proportions" (of elements, that is).

But how could isomers have the same atomic composition and yet be different substances? One possibility is that it is not just the number of atoms of each element that is distinctive, but their physical arrangement within the molecule. This thought, however, was something chemists shuddered away from. The whole notion of atoms was a shaky one. Atoms were useful in explaining chemical properties but they could not be seen or detected in any way, and they might very well be no more than convenient fictions. To start talking about molecules was to advance further down the road of accepting atoms as real entities than most chemists cared to—or dared to.

The phenomenon of isomerism was therefore left unaccounted for and kept suspended until such time as chemical advance might produce an explanation.

One difference in properties between tartaric and racemic acid was particularly interesting. A solution of tartaric acid or of its salts (that is, compounds in which the acid hydrogen of the compound was replaced by an atom of such elements as sodium or potassium) was optically active. It rotated the plane of polarized light clockwise and was therefore "dextrorotatory" (see last month's article), so that the compound could well be called *d*-tartaric acid.

A solution of racemic acid, on the other hand, was optically inactive. It did *not* rotate the plane of polarized light in either direction. This difference in properties was clearly demonstrated by the French chemist, Jean Baptiste Biot, whom I mentioned last month as a pioneer in the science of polarimetry.

No one at the time knew why any substance should be optically active in solution, but they did know this: Those crystals known to be optically active had asymmetric structures. In that case, if one were to prepare crystals of tartaric acid and racemic acid or of their respective salts, it would surely turn out that those of the former were asymmetric and those of the latter symmetric.

In 1844, the German chemist, Eilhardt Mitscherlich, undertook this investigation. He formed crystals of the sodium ammonium salt of both tartaric acid and racemic acid, studied them carefully, and announced that the two substances had absolutely identical crystals.

The basic findings of the budding science of polarimetry were blasted by this report, and for the moment all was confusion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was at this point that the young French chemist, Louis Pasteur, enters the scene. He was only in his twenties, and his scholastic record at school had been mediocre, yet he had the temerity to suspect it possible that Mitscherlich (a chemist of the first rank) might have been mistaken. After all, the crystals he studied were small, and perhaps some tiny details were overlooked.

Pasteur applied himself to the matter and began to produce the crystals and study them painstakingly under a hand lens. He finally decided that there was a definite asymmetry to the crystals of the sodium ammonium salt of tartaric acid. So far, so good. That, at least, was to be expected since the substance was optically active.

But was it possible now that the sodium ammonium salt of racemic acid yielded crystals of precisely the same sort, as Mitscherlich maintained? In that case, there would be asymmetric crystals of a substance which was *not* optically active and that would be very unsettling.

Pasteur produced and studied the crystals of the salt of racemic acid and found that they were indeed also asymmetric *but that not all the crystals were identical.*

Some of the crystals were exactly like those of the sodium ammonium salt of tartaric acid, but others were mirror-images of the first group and were asymmetric in the opposite sense.

Could it be that racemic acid was half tartaric acid and half the mirror-image of tartaric acid, and that the reason racemic acid was optically inactive was that it was made up of two parts; one part of which neutralized the effect of the other part?

This had to be checked directly. Making use of his hand crystal and a pair of tweezers, Pasteur began to work over those tiny crystals of the racemic acid salt. All those which were right-handed he shoved to one side; all those which were left-handed, to the other. It took him a long time for he wanted to make no mistake, but he was eventually done.

He then dissolved each set of crystals in a separate sample of water and found both solutions to be optically active!

One of the solutions was dextrorotatory, exactly as tartaric acid was. In fact, it *was* tartaric acid, in every sense.

The other was levorotatory, and differed from tartaric acid in rotating the plane of polarized light in the opposite direction. It was *l*-tartaric acid.

Pasteur's conclusion, announced in 1848, when he was only 26, was that racemic acid was optically inactive only because it consisted of equal quantities of *d*-tartaric acid and *l*-tartaric acid.

The announcement created a sensation and Biot, the grand old man of polarimetry, who was 74 years old at the time, cautiously refused to accept

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pasteur's finding. Pasteur therefore undertook to demonstrate the matter to him in person.

Biot gave the young man a sample of racemic acid which he had personally tested and which he knew to be optically inactive. Under Biot's shrewd old eyes, alert for hanky-panky, Pasteur formed the salt, crystallized it, isolated the crystals, and separated them painstakingly by means of hand lens and tweezers. Biot then took over. He personally prepared the solutions from each set of crystals and placed them in the polarimeter.

You guessed it. He found that both solutions were optically active, one in the opposite sense to the other. After that, with typical Gallic enthusiasm, he became fanatically pro-Pasteur.

Actually, Pasteur had been most fortunate. When the sodium ammonium salt of racemic acid crystallizes, it doesn't have to form separate mirror-image crystals. It might also form combination-crystals in each of which are equal numbers of molecules of *d*-tartaric acid and *l*-tartaric acid. These combination-crystals are symmetrical.

Had Pasteur obtained these crystals he would still have noted their difference from those of the sodium ammonium salt of tartaric-acid and have refuted Mitscherlich. On the other hand, he would have missed the far greater discovery of the reason for the optical inactivity of racemic acid and he would also have missed having been the very first man to form optically active substances from an optically inactive start.

As it happens, only symmetric combination-crystals are formed out of solutions above 28° C. (82° F.) It requires solutions of sodium ammonium salt of racemic acid at temperatures below 28° C. to form separate sets of asymmetric crystals. Furthermore, the crystals formed are usually so tiny that they are far too small to separate with hand lens alone. It just happened that Pasteur was working at low temperatures and under conditions which produced fairly good-sized crystals.

Pasteur might be dismissed as an ordinary man who took advantage of an unexpected good break but (as I used to tell my biochemistry class) he managed to take advantage of similarly unexpected good breaks every five years or so. After a while, you had to come to the conclusion that it was Pasteur who was remarkable and not the laws of chance.

As Pasteur himself once said, "Chance favors the prepared mind." We all get our share of lucky breaks, and the great man is he who is capable of recognizing a break when it comes, and of taking advantage of it.

Pasteur continued to interest himself in the matter of the tartaric acids. He found that if he heated *d*-tartaric acid for prolonged periods under certain conditions, some of the molecules would change to the *l*-form, and racemic acid would be produced. (Ever since, the ability to change optical activity to optical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inactivity by heat or by some chemical process through formation of some of the oppositely-active form has been known as "racemization.")

Pasteur also found a kind of tartaric acid that was optically inactive, which could not be separated into opposite forms under any conditions, and which possessed properties distinct from those of racemic acid. He called it *meso*-tartaric acid, from the Greek word for "intermediate," since it seemed intermediate between the *d*- and the *l*- forms of the acid.

But all these facts could not explain the existence of optical activity in solutions. Granted that some crystals are symmetrical, while others are asymmetric in one sense or the other; still there are no crystals in solutions. There are only molecules.

Could not the molecules themselves retain the asymmetry of the crystals? Was not the asymmetry of the crystals but a reflection of that of the molecules that composed them? Was not racemization a result of the heat-induced rearrangment of atoms within the molecule? Pasteur was sure of all this, but he could think of no way of proving it or of demonstrating what the arrangements must be.

In the 1860's, to be sure, the German chemist, Friedrich August Kekule, worked out a system whereby a molecule was pictured not as merely a conglomeration of so many atoms of this element or that, but as a collection of atoms connected to one another in a definite arrangement (see THE EUREKA PHENOMENON, June 1971). Little dashes were used between symbols of the elements to represent the "bonds" linking one atom to another so that the molecule did get to look like a Tinker-toy.

However, the Kekule structures were considered to be highly schematic and to be merely another useful tool for chemists who were working out organic structures and reactions. As in the case of atoms themselves, chemists were not prepared to say that the Kekule structures actually represented the true situation within the molecules.

The Kekule structures did explain the existence of many isomers since they demonstrated gross differences in atomic arrangement even when the total numbers of atoms of each element present within the molecule were the same. The Kekule structures did *not*, however (as used originally) account for those "optical isomers" which differed *only* in the way in which they twisted the plane of polarized light.

We next come to the Dutch chemist, Jacobus Henricus van't Hoff, who took up the problem in 1874, when he was only 22. The following represents what may have been his line of reasoning.

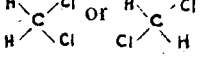
According to the Kekule system, a carbon atom is represented by the letter C, with four little bonds attached to it. Usually, these little bonds are shown pointing to the corners of an imaginary square, thus, so that the angle

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between any two adjacent bonds is 90°. A carbon atom will combine with four hydrogen atoms to form the substance, methane, which will then look like this:

Are the four bonds identical? If each is different from the rest, somehow, then what would happen if one of the hydrogn atoms is replaced by a chlorine atoms to form "methylene chloride." Then, if we still deal with bonds methyl chlorides, depending on which of the four different bonds the chlorine atom happed to attach itself to.

But there aren't. There is only one methyl chloride and no more. This indicates that the four carbon bonds are equivalent and, indeed, if the four are drawn to the corners of a square, that is what should be expected. One corner of the square should be no different from any other.

Consider the situation, though, if *two* chlorine atoms replace hydrogen atoms to form "methylene chloride." Then, if we still deal with bonds pointing to the corners of a square, there ought to be two different methylene chlorides, depending on whether the two chlorine atoms are placed at adjacent corners of the square or at opposite corners, thus: 

But there aren't. There is only one methylene chloride and no more, which shows that the Kekule structures can't possibly correspond to reality (and, of course, no one claimed that they did).

One way in which they were almost certain not to correspond to reality was that all were drawn, for convenience' sake, in two dimensions; that is, in a plane; and surely it was unlikely that all molecules would be strictly planar in nature.

The four bonds of the carbon atoms were almost certainly distributed in three dimensions, and it was only necessary to choose some 3-D arrangement in which each bond was equally adjacent to all three remaining bonds. Only then would there be only a single methylene chloride.

The simplest way of arranging this was to have the four bonds pointing toward the apices of a tetrahedron*. The carbon atom then looks as though it were resting on three bonds forming a squat tripod while the fourth bond was pointing straight up. It doesn't matter which bond you point upward, the other three always form the squat tripod. The carbon atom can thus stand in each of four different positions and look the same each time. What's more, any one bond is equally far from each of the other three. The angle between any two bonds is 109 1/2°.

** A tetrahedron is a solid bounded by four equilateral triangles. It can best be understood if it is inspected in the form of a three-dimensional model. Failing that, you are probably familiar with the shape of the Egyptian pyramids—a square base, with each wall slanting inward from one side of that base toward an apex on the top. Well, if you imagine a triangular base instead, you have a tetrahedron.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If we deal with such a "tetrahedral carbon" then as long as two of the bonds are attached to identical atoms (or groups of atoms). it doesn't matter what atoms, or groups of atoms are attached to the other two; in every case all possible arrangements are equivalent and only one molecule is formed.

Thus, if attached to the four bonds of a carbon atom, are *aaaa* or *aaab,* or *aabb,* or *aabc,* then it doesn't matter to which bond which atom is attached. If you attach them so as to form what seem to be two different arrangements, then by twisting the first arrangement so that some different bond faces upward, you can make it identical with the second.

Not so when you have four different atoms or groups of atoms attached to the four bonds: *abcd.* In that case, it turns out there are two different and distinct arrangements possible; one of which is the mirror-image of the other. No amount of twisting and turning can then make one arrangement look like the other, any more than any amount of twisting and turning will make a left shoe fit a right foot. A carbon atom to which four different atoms or groups of atoms are attached is an "asymmetric carbon."

It turns out that optically active organic substances invariably have asymmetric molecules if the Van't Hoff system is used. Almost always there is at least one asymmetric carbon present. (Sometimes there is an asymmetric atom other than carbon present, and sometimes the molecule as a whole is asymmetric even though none of the carbon atoms are.)

In tartaric acid there are present two asymmetric carbon atoms. Either can be present in a certain configuration or in its mirror-image. Let's refer to these arbitrarily as *p* and *q* (since *q* is the mirror-image of *p*). If the two carbon atoms are *pp* then we have *d*-tartaric acid and if *qq* l-tartaric acid.

If the two halves of the molecule, each with one asymmetric carbon were not identical, we would have two other optically active forms, *pq* and *qp.* In the case of tartaric acid, however, the two halves *are* identical in structure so that *pq* and *qp* are identical and, in each case, the optical activity of one half balances the other. The net result is optical *in*activity, and we have *meso*-tartaric acid.

It is not easy to see all this without careful structural formulas, which I will not plague you with. The crucial point to remember is that from 1874 right down to the present day, all questions of optical activity, no matter how involved, have been satisfactorily explained by a careful consideration of the tetrahedral carbon atom together with similar structures for other atoms. Although our knowledge of atomic structure has enormously expanded in the century since, Van't Hoff's geometrical picture remains as useful as ever.

Van't Hoff's paper dealing with the tetrahedral atom appeared in a Dutch journal in September 1874. Two months later, a somewhat similar paper appeared in a French journal. The author was a French chemist, Joseph Achille Le Bel, who was 27 at the time.

The two young men worked it out independently so that both are given equal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

credit, and one usually speaks of the Van't Hoff-Le Bel theory.

The tetrahedral atom did not at once meet with the approval of all chemists. After all, there was still no direct evidence that atoms existed at all (and nothing direct enough to be convincing was to come for another generation). To some of the older and more conservative chemists, therefore, the new view, placing atom bonds just so, smacked of mysticism.

In 1877, the German chemist, Hermann Kolbe, then 59 years old and full of renown, published a strong criticism of Van't Hoff and his views. It was quite within Kolbe's right to criticize, for it *could* be argued that the new view went beyond the foundations of chemistry as they then existed.

In fact, an essential part of the practical working of the scientific method is that new ideas be subjected to searching criticism. They must be jumped at and hammered down in fair and sporting fashion, for one of the tests of the value of the new idea is its ability to survive hard knocks.

Kolbe, however, was neither fair nor sporting. He characterized Van't Hoff as a "practically unknown chemist," which had nothing to do with the case. Even more unforgiveably, he sneered at him for holding a position at the Veterinary School of Utrecht, managing to refer to it three times in a short space, thus exhibiting a rather unlovely professorial snobbery.

Nevertheless, to those who think that the scientific "establishment" has the power to quash useful advances permanently at the simple behest of conservatism and snobbery, let it be stated that the tetrahedral atom was adopted with reasonable speed. It worked so well that not all of Kolbe's sour fulminations could stop it, and Van't Hoff's career went on untouched. (In fact, Van't Hoff rapidly became one of the leading physical chemists in the world, and in 1901, when the Nobel Prizes were established, the first award in chemistry went to him.)

Kolbe is today best known, perhaps, not for his own very real contributions to chemistry, but for his diatribe against Van't Hoff.*

And again a new advance meant new problems. Once the structure of the carbon atom and its bonds had been worked out, and the details of molecules described in 3-D, a curious asymmetry turned out to exist in living tissue. That will be the subject of next month's article.

**I was recently challenged to give my views on a book of far-out theory by someone who said he wanted my views especially if unfavorable as he was making a collection which would someday, in hindsight, make very amusing reading. The book of far-out theory seemed like nonsense to me, but I was aware of Kolbe's misfortune and I hesitated. But then I decided that I was not going to duck the issue out of fear for posterity's views. I thought the theories were worthless and I said so. However, I was polite about it. That much costs nothing.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Thurston was the winner of the first prize awarded by New American Library for the best story to come out of the Clarion workshop, which in its short life has already discovered a large number of talented sf writers. Mr. Thurston is 34, a dropout Ph. D. candidate and college professor. "I have also been a newspaper reporter, served in the army and managed a bookstore. The bookstore burned down, so I guess now I am a fulltime writer." Which is good news to sf readers, for on the evidence of this story and another in our inventory, Mr. Thurston is an accomplished storyteller.

Carolyn's Laughter

by ROBERT THURSTON

KINOT HATED TO WATCH THE Ape. He felt it was undignified to sit around looking at a dumb animal's dumb tricks. The Ape's name was Rex, but Kinot always thought of him as The Ape. Actually Rex wasn't even an ape, he was a chimp. But when you hated an animal as much as Kinot hated this one, it didn't matter much if you classified him correctly. The Ape was a subdued, even gentle, animal. There was little in his overall personality to encourage anybody's hatred. It was just that he had Carolyn's hands.

–Carolyn looking up at him, her hair a wavy red frame between the pale whiteness of her face and the linen-white of the pillow, saying, "I love you." Carolyn braving the first harsh wind of autumn, running against the wind for a city block, hollering to the upper floors of the encroaching tenements, "I never want to die, NEVER!" Carolyn lying on a moving cot down a shadowy hospital corridor, already a vegetable even before the official death pronouncement. Carolyn's last quiet breaths in the next room as Kinot helped the doctor and hospital lawyer contact the right relatives to approve Carolyn's own wish that her body be the donor for any possible transplants. Carolyn's shell lying in a coffin, painted to look real, causing Kinot to wonder if they plugged up the spaces left behind when so many of her organs had been removed. Carolyn's ghost seeming to float above the grave at the same moments that clods of dirt were thumping hollowly upon her coffin, her eyes studying Kinot with a clinical interest, her face lacking in any expression he remembered. Carolyn interrupting every damn dream that seemed headed for a pleasant ending–

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now, called in to stare at a droop-jawed simian, he thought he could feel the ghost of Carolyn's soft hands pulling at his arm while he looked at her real hands, hardened by Ape activity, lined and veined with a few more years of aging. Six years had passed since her hands had been grafted to this animal and passed the rejection crisis successfully. Since that time The Ape had learned the glories of the opposable thumb, picked up a multitude of tricks, and traveled the stages of the world as a vaudevillian advertisement for his new breed, called *chimeras* by the doctors who indulged in such monster-making. Now it was rumored that new chimeras would soon be publicly introduced. Weekly magazines had made much of a supposed dolphin with human arms, speculating excitedly on the possibilities of grafted kangaroo pouches onto animals whose young needed more protection in the ever-thinning wilderness environment, and of antelope legs on traditionally slow beasts of the field. Kinot believed that, if The Ape was any example of the crying need for chimeras in modern society, then he was not sure that animal-hybridization was such a hot idea.

The Ape paced around gracelessly, sometimes knocked over a piece of its room, then looked down at the damage with no regret. Yet, for all the clumpish stupidity of this beast, there at the end of his arms hung, as if attached only by paper clips, Carolyn's hands. Her artistic fingers, tapered to a narrow tip, moved smoothly whenever The Ape did anything with his hands. Although he seemed obviously to recognize that the hands were mere guests attached to his arms, he operated the hands in a different way than he moved the rest of his body. When he grabbed something, the action was performed with something like grace, a feminine gesture that didn't fit in with the ugly maleness of the rest of him. Sometimes The Ape swung his hairy thin arms recklessly, as if to punish the hands for not acting ape-like, for doing things in a way that did not please him. Sometimes he hit the floor fiercely with the back of a hand, for no apparent reason at all. At other times he wandered around in evident confusion, smashing obstacles. Then the hands seemed to be leading him. Even his puffy face had the look of a follower on it.

Kinot watched The Ape through a one-way partition, glad of the safety which the glass provided. A door opened behind him. Without looking, he knew it was Dr. Bredeluch. Bredeluch had called him here in the first place, had silently ushered him into this dark observation room, then had left without a word. Now he sat down in the chair beside Kinot and whispered: "Notice anything strange?"

"No. Just an imbecilic ape slamming around a room with my former girl friend's hands dangling at the end of his wrists. Why should I find that at all strange?"

Kinot delivered sardonic remarks

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in a low growling voice. Bredeluch, a friend for ten years, grasped the paralinguistic signals immediately.

"Calm down, Larry. I called you here purely for reasons of research, not to stir up tragic memories."

"Research? How can I be of any help in that?"

"Because of Carolyn. You knew her better than anyone else."

"Is that any reason why I have to be an authority on her? Just because I loved the person holding the league record for being the donor in the highest number of transplant cases to date? There should be some kind of law against invading the sanctity of a memory-holder."

"I understand why you're irritated but—"

"Charles, in the first year after her death, after you guys had excavated all the usable material from her body, I must have been interviewed a hundred times. By doctors, various organ specialists, researchers, experts in related fields, even a couple of thrill-seeking friends. Know how I felt? Each time I spoke of it, each time I dredged up a memory that would set my interviewer's face into a cement slab of satisfaction, I felt almost as if I'd lost, at least for that moment, a fragment of my love for Carolyn. It seemed to ooze out of me with the words I spoke. That's why I stopped talking, granted no more interviews. I wouldn't have come here today for anybody else, Charles."

"I appreciate that, Larry. But I'm not asking for memories, I'm asking for help. Besides, I thought maybe that, since your marriage, you—"

"That I would have forgotten my feelings for Carolyn? Sure I love Reba, I love her deeply, but that doesn't automatically cancel out what I felt for Carolyn. I visit her grave every week, the only really peaceful moment I have."

Bredeluch appeared to be embarrassed by what Kinot said. The Ape, its face a gargantuan blank, rested in a top drawer of a bureau that he had previously forced open. His arms dangled outside, fingers nervously fidgeting with the drawer handles.

"Larry," Bredeluch finally said, "there's something wrong with that chimp, and we don't know what it is."

"You expect me to tell you? I thought you were the expert on transplant behavior. I thought you studied the effects of the Grafting and Cutting Division of your profession."

"I do. That's why there's a problem at all. Because I defined it."

The Ape sprang suddenly into action. It leaped out of its drawer and began pulling out other drawers filled with clothing, rummaging through them.

"Carolyn was a fine girl, Larry. I admit we got a lot of mileage out of her story, and we did use it for calculated purposes, publicity-wise. In our naive way we thought it could be an important breakthrough in the public resistance to offering themselves as donors. Here we had one patient willing to donate anything of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her body we could use. Nine separate transplant operations, eight of them immediately successful, one to die within the year, three over the next couple of years, four still surviving to this day—"

"The Ape one of the four?"

"Of course."

Kinot grunted.

"Whatever you think of chimeras, the record of transplants from Carolyn was phenomenal. Naturally we P-R'ed it to the hilt. In these days when so many people's lives could be extended by comparatively simple operations, it is inconceivable to me that any person who definitely knew that he was dying would not offer his body to save others. But many people do not, more of them than you might think. You'd be surprised at the superstitiousness of people nowadays. Some think their souls will not rest peacefully in heaven if some part of the body still exists somewhere on earth. If they're not willing to save someone else's life, I don't know what the hell they're doing in heaven in the first place."

"Most believers see heaven as a sort of super rest home, Charles, with whirlpool massage and everything. Way I see it, is that maybe once they're past the pearly gates, without their liver or whatever's missing, maybe the liver won't be able to locate them when *it* gets to heaven, what with the overcrowding and all."

"Joke if you want. Features of the problem are ludicrous, after all. Nevertheless it can be quite a hassle, getting the necessary organs for transplantation. At the time, I thought Carolyn's story would encourage others to follow her lead. But I've seen little evidence that indicates any sort of decline in the usual public resistance. We get a substantial number of donors per year but not nearly enough for the yearly potential operation setups. And nobody has shown desire to duplicate her feat. Most donors draw the line at a single or, at most, two organs."

"Sure, they want to go to the grave relatively intact."

"It's easy to make light of it—"

"I am not making light of anything. I have recurrent fears that what we deposited in the earth was a plastic mock-up of Carolyn, that there was not enough left of the original to even send to the undertaker."

Nodding, Bredeluch continued:

"What I am getting at is that the Carolyn phenomenon is the only one of its kind, which considerably narrows the limits of my study."

"What the hell is your study anyway?"

"The results of multiple transplants, that is, a plurality of organs from the same donor. Besides Carolyn, I have only a few double and one that originally was a triple, although its companion organs in other patients were rejected within the first year. So, naturally, I've been able to follow up on Carolyn's recipients with some exactitude."

"Terrific."

The Ape had found a piece of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paper and was wildly waving it toward the mirror. It appeared as if he knew that the two men were on the other side of the glass. His face, however, retained its simian expressionlessness.

"Up until a couple of weeks ago, the ingredients of my study were fairly routine, though of interest to the scientific world. But lately things have changed a bit."

The Ape continued to flourish the piece of paper. He advanced toward the mirror with apparent purpose. Kinot looked to see if The Ape had a message to convey, but the paper was blank except for the hospital letterhead.

"Of the nine transplants, only the liver one failed. A kidney failure eleven months later was the first casualty among the survivors. Of the rest, a lung and the other kidney went in the next two years, while the recipient of her ovaries died in a birth accident which may or may not have medical relevance to the organ transplant itself. The remaining survivors utilize Carolyn's other lung, her eyes, Rex here the hands—and, as you know, the heart."

Kinot nodded. The casual way Bredeluch described the reshuffling of Carolyn's organs nauseated him. In the next room The Ape jumped up and down wildly. His passive face seemed unconnected to his violent movements.

"Study has shown little beyond the usual postoperative developments in the case of the lung recipient, nothing that *I've* discovered anyway. However, the man who received the corneas of her eyes—a businessman whose psychological readings register as extremely stable—has been reporting hallucinations for several months. He recently moved to Brazil for his company, and my information is based on his letters to me and the report of a specialist down there. The doctor can find no medical or psychiatric reason for this man to be seeing things. All through his blindness he had been patient and reasonable; he received new sight with a professional aplomb which surprised all of us. There is no computable factor why he should be having hallucinations now."

"So a usually normal guy is quietly going off his nut. I don't see how this can have anything to do with Carolyn or me."

"By itself it wouldn't. However, Rex here is a second case in point. As you know, he was the only transplant to an animal and, as such, has created some controversy. Therefore, his actions are watched quite closely. On a recent tour he began acting strangely. Throwing things around like a human in a temper tantrum."

"That's not unusual in apes, is it?"

"It was unusual for Rex, who's a normally placid animal. Notice how calm he looks right now, even as he romps around the room in evident hysterics. Not all of his deviancy has been of a hysterical nature. Sometimes his hands force his legs to kneel and then themselves go into a prayer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

position. When Rex tries to eat, the hands seem to refuse to bring the food to his mouth."

"Now come on, Charles. Okay, I'll play skeptic if you want. How can you blame the stupid actions of a stupid ape on human hands? What valid evidence do you have that somehow this animal's actions have something to do with the fact that he carries Carolyn's hands around with him?"

The Ape, again rummaging in a drawer, stopped and half turned toward the mirror. As if he, too, were waiting for Bredeluch's answer.

"I agree that the chimp's actions are not necessarily related to the transplant. If it weren't for the businessman's hallucinations (which, incidentally, coincide roughly with the beginning of Rex's deviant activity) and one other factor about Rex, I would not have consulted you yet. You see, another strange action, which seems governed completely by the hands, has no present rational explanation. Rex, basically an untrained animal except for the minor tricks taught him since the operation, has several times gone to a piano and, in between stretches of the usual cacophonous chimpanzee-type poundings, has produced for significant durations of time recognizable themes from classical pieces."

Kinot did not know what to say. He knew what Bredeluch was getting at: Carolyn had been a talented amateur pianist.

"The melodies are quite recognizable, and they, for the brief time they occur, are *played* rather than pounded out. The hands seem to meet some resistance from the arms and the playing style is forced. Nevertheless, sometimes the snatch of melody has a definite, very sad mood to it."

"I can't even imagine that! This imbecilic-looking ape tinkling at a piano, playing an intricate tune, and smiling like Liberace? Charles, I can't believe that you would not seek a logical explanation for the fact that it can pick out what you think is a melody!"

"That's just it, Larry. We've examined the rational possibilities, but they just don't jell. Anyway, like anyone else when we feel the madness pushing up our neck hairs, we see what we can do with it. I have an uncomfortable, perhaps superstitious feeling about this, and that's why I called you."

The Ape had returned to rummaging through the drawers. The contents of the bureau were strewn across the room. The movements of the hands were more frantic now.

"So you have an otherwise sane man tripping off illogically and a musical ape with. . .with very versatile hands. Interesting evidence but not much to build a case on. Especially to draw some wild connection between these deviations and the fact that they each have a piece of Carolyn sewn onto them. I won't buy it, Charles."

The Ape seemed to find what it wanted, a thin cylindrical object. As the animal raced around the room

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

apparently looking for something else, Kinot recognized that it clutched in its hands a mechanical pencil.

"I'm not trying to convince you of anything, Larry. I'm merely trying to piece together the facts. I've come to no conclusions; I've just entered the possibility of a supernatural explanation as one of many to be considered."

The Ape located what it wanted—or, rather, relocated it. He picked up the piece of paper and carried it to the top of the bureau.

"Besides," Bredeluch continued, "there's one set of facts to be introduced. And you and I are both avoiding their introduction like the plague. The fourth case, the heart transplant. . ."

The Ape squatted on the bureau. With some difficulty he positioned the pencil between his thumb and forefinger, and began to scribble on the paper. So The Ape is just full of tricks, Kinot thought. How is Charles going to relate this one to his other fantastic implications?

"I'm not avoiding anything, Charles. Reba's case, like that of the lung patient, should disprove this cockamanie theory. Her behavior hasn't changed one bit. . ."

"Are you sure?"

"What are you getting at?"

The Ape finished his scribbling, tossed the pencil over his shoulder, and leaped off the bureau.

"I'm getting at the fact that the change in Reba began before you married her, that the change in her has been too gradual for you to notice."

The Ape ran directly to the mirror, climbed on a chair to get up to its level. As they talked, both men watched the animal.

"What do you mean?"

The Ape tried to press the paper against the mirror. It slipped and fell below the bottom border of the glass.

"Before the operation Reba was an open and cheerful pragmatist. Since, her behavior pattern has reversed almost totally."

"So what? Marriage has been known to cause some change in personality before."

"Not usually so drastically, and there's little in your behavior to influence her so much. I wouldn't put much stock in her transformation by itself, but in conjunction with my businessman in Brazil and Rex here. . ."

They both stared at the glass. The Ape had repositioned the paper. A message written by Carolyn's hands was clearly legible. One word written three times. *Help*, it said. *Help help help.*

When he arrived home, Kinot saw the Do Not Disturb sign hanging from Reba's doorknob. The sign meant she was now in a trance. Once he had interrupted her while she was out and had shaken her awake. She had been furious at him, both for blowing her karma and for causing a splitting headache. Her anger had sobered him, since communication,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of any kind, came from her so rarely. Ever since then, she put the Do Not Disturb sign out as a warning.

No use barging in on her. Anyhow, he did not know just how to tell her about his day's experiences. Describing what Bredeluch said would not be so hard, he could easily imbue that with proper sarcasm, but The Ape's scrawled writing was another matter. With her penchant for mystical hobbies—she'd run the hoodoo gamut from astral projection to yoga—she would jump at the screwiest explanation possible. Screwy explanations were not exactly out of order. For a change, Reba's insights would be no sillier than anybody else's. Bredeluch had gone into fits of hysterical reasoning after The Ape pushed the paper against the glass. He was ready to credit the strange occurrences surrounding Carolyn's operations to any of several possibilities—from Red Chinese tamperings to witchcraft. Reba, what with her proficiency in the black arts, might be a proper consultant now.

Kinot mixed himself a screwdriver and tried to decide how to approach Reba on what was, after all, a rather delicate matter. She knew all about his love for Carolyn. Although she had accepted it when they married, she had often made sarcastic references to it since then. She said she didn't know how to cope with him, not knowing if he'd married her for herself or for the quite grotesque reason that part of Carolyn beat within her breast. Kinot had acted shocked at the suggestion but afterwards had wondered if there were not some truth to it.

He and Reba certainly had met under morbid circumstances. Distraught over the loss of Carolyn, he deliberately chose to meet all the transplant patients. After seeing the others and briefly peeking in at the repulsive ape, he conducted a long conversation with the thin-faced, dark-haired girl with Carolyn's heart. Nothing came of that first meeting, although a newsman who had shadowed him took a secret photograph which was good for some titillating second-page copy. Later, adjusted somewhat to Carolyn's death, he began to visit Reba regularly in the hospital during her convalescent period. Bredeluch, always interested in consequences, encouraged him on the grounds that the operation seemed to profit from Kinot's visits. For Kinot they occupied time during a difficult period. Reba, moody and pensive, spent much of their time together in silence. Occasionally she said something gloomy and mysterious. Gradually Kinot became fascinated by her.

After her discharge from the hospital Kinot became her constant companion. As she regained strength, she became spirited and quite alluring. They went on trips to the country where she taunted and tantalized him with a new-found gaiety. With Kinot at least Reba was, as Bredeluch had characterized her, somewhat "open and cheerful,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

although not much of a pragmatist. However, around other people she withdrew, often refusing to speak, sometimes retreating moodily to an unpopulated corner. Kinot paid little attention to this trait, attributing it to shyness, and excused her occasional rude comments to his friends.

Before marrying, he and Reba examined all the possibilities: what other people would say, or joke about behind their backs; how they would receive publicity for the bizarre aspect of their venture; how his previous life with Carolyn would affect their union. Kinot had assumed they were taking the famed Big Step rationally. Later he learned the mistake of assuming Reba to be rational in any matter.

Their wedding made the front pages. The newsman resuscitated his hospital photograph, thus ordaining the event with a slight curse of notoriety. Some, but not all, of what they feared did happen. But most of the world decided to sentimentalize their relationship into a Great Love Story, which helped immeasurably. Their honeymoon was an extended tour around the world, enabling the media to forget them easily.

Bredeluch had been right about one thing, although Kinot would never have admitted it to him. Reba *had* changed gradually since they first met. She had retreated first from the world at large, then from their circle of friends, then from her family. Each withdrawal did not especially upset Kinot, a loner by nature, but lately she had been retreating from him. There was a Do Not Disturb sign hanging often from her neck.

For their conversation Reba made herself comfortable in a yoga position. Sitar music drifted arhythmically from the record player. Incense filled the room with musky odor. The only illumination came from thick bright-colored candles. Tarot card posters covered the walls. Astrology books lay in piles upon short-legged tables. Occult knick-knacks cluttered up the room.

Reba looked tired. The starkness of her black eyes was diminished by the puffy darkness surrounding them. Her face, once the picture of storybook health, had grown as pale as Carolyn's had been. Even though she apparently held herself stiffly, there was a slump in her shoulders.

The incense making him long for a cigarette (Reba forbade smoking in her haven), he told her of his conversation with Bredeluch and the strange actions of The Ape. Reba listened without apparent emotion.

"Carolyn's soul is disturbed," she said dogmatically, after he had finished. "She is trying to contact us, to tell us something about the transplanting. Perhaps she is unable to find rest in the afterlife because of the parts of her that still throb with life here."

"I *knew* you'd say that. Well, it's crap! Bredeluch said so himself; he said the profession is plagued by superstitions like that."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reba sneered, antiscientifically.

"Sometimes I feel Carolyn's presence very strongly. In this room. She seems to reach out to me. At the same time I feel a strange pressure in the heart."

Reba always called it "the heart," instead of my heart or, even *her* heart.

"I think Carolyn is trying to convince me to die," Reba said, her eyes glassy.

"Hogwash. I will not buy the idea of jealousy from beyond the grave."

"You don't believe Carolyn would kill me if she had the chance? Frighten me to death with a sudden ghostly appearance? She knows she can't. She knows I have too many powers which counterbalance the threat of her. I could control her if she came close enough."

Reba, her eyes closed, began to rock slowly from side to side. Kinot recognized the wall around her. A piece of candle dropped to the floor with an unoccult thud. Reba began to mutter an incantation. The sitar music became especially violent.

Anger building up inside him, Kinot entered the house of Mars.

"Why are you so goddamned jealous? We had all that out long ago, about Carolyn and me."

Reba opened her eyes. She looked fairly rational.

"I am not jealous. I have insights into truth, glimpses of the hell which others shut up in forbidden corners of the brain. I know that Carolyn was the great love of your life, that you turned to me in spiritual blindness, and chose the incomplete being over the dead complete one."

"Like I said, you're jealous."

"You're trying to provoke an argument in order to demonstrate your masculine superiority in matters of logic. I award you the prize. Logic doesn't interest me."

"At least you prove yourself to be a woman from time to time."

"What do you mean? You have complaints?"

"I sure as hell do! I want equal rights in this household. I want a woman who'll greet me at the door with a wifely kiss, instead of hiding behind a Do Not Disturb sign in a trance. I want a woman who'll whip up instant foods and let me taste the stirring spoon, instead of a crypto-witch cooking up spells. I want a woman who'll whisper sweet nothings in my ear, instead of mouthing private incantations in early Anglo-Saxon. I want some kind of normal married life."

"Like the life that might have been? The cozy suburban routine, with Carolyn and the kids, Saturday at the laundromat and Sunday in church? Or do you lead a more complicated fantasy life with Carolyn?"

"You are jealous of her! *You are!*"

Reba picked up an amulet off a table. She stared at it meaningfully. Kinot did not know how to talk to her any more. Maybe she did have mystic powers. That last crack about Carolyn certainly hit home. He had spent many private hours mentally

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sketching out the marriage that might have been, with Carolyn. And, as Reba hinted, it was an exceptionally complex fantasy life. Two or three nights ago, alone in bed and ignoring the strange noises from Reba's room, he had taken Carolyn on a wild tour of Las Vegas where they'd become mixed up innocently in a strange web of Mafia killings, had clung together desperately while hiding away in an orchestra pit of a closed night club, and, together with Frank Sinatra and the rest of the clan, had routed the mob and cleaned up the town for good. Yes, Reba, that's where you're wrong—no stratified organizational pigeonholed suburban monotony for me, no washing machines, no electric toothbrushes, no crab grass sorting.

What could he say to her? Was it right of Reba to force him continually into a comparison between her and Carolyn? All their married life he had tried to avoid actually making a quantitative or qualitative decision about the two women. In his mind it was the only way to treat Reba fairly. Carolyn was dead, she could not come back. There was no point in making a ritual out of what might have been. Sure, sometimes he thought about her. If there were a pill which would cause him to forget her, he would take it. But sometimes she sneaked into his mind, and the two of them closed the door to the outside world and traveled on these fantasy trips.

He had come to Reba's room to help settle his nerves, but she was not willing to settle anything. Her hostility was thicker than the layers of incense.

"I need your help, Reba."

"Don't beg me. Beg from Carolyn. She's here now. I can feel her presence."

"Stop putting me down. I ask for your help, no one else's."

Reba's eyes were closed again. She moved the upper part of her body sensuously, as if accepting the caresses of the devil.

"Petition me," she said.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Ask. Specify your request so that I may consider it."

"I'm not asking a specific request. If I had any idea what the right question was, I'd have asked it long ago. Let's get out of this room. It chokes me."

"I prefer it here. Other rooms of this house are too untidy; they remind me of the housework I must do. Housework interferes with my meditation. It is bad vibrations."

"Like me."

"Now that you mention it."

Lately, talking with her was always like this—Kinot trying to discuss logically, Reba slowly fading into her quasi-guru voice. She always jumped at the first available tangent and dragged him along behind her. Often, when he left the room, he'd forgotten what he had intended to discuss with her. Every time he asked himself why he put up with her at all, he remembered a tender and loving moment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Please, Reba. I need you. Your help. I need. . .I need advice."

The sadness in his voice seemed to awaken her. She opened her eyes, and they showed concern. She untwisted from the lotus position and pulled herself onto a chair. A hand rubbing her chest, she spoke in a normal tone of voice.

"What help can I be?"

Now—if only he could get through three consecutive sentences without angering her. He wanted to take her hand, but he knew she would suspect his motivation.

"It's just that the events of today had such a strange effect on me that I thought, with your knowledge of occult matters, you could shed some light on the situation."

One sentence down. Her eyes remained calm, her body still. So far, so good.

"Since Bredeluch's use of scientific methods has not proven anything, it seemed to me that there may be other methods to apply."

Two sentences. Her eyes narrowed. She moved in her chair, but to obtain a more comfortable position. One more sentence, and over the hump to rational discussion.

"I thought that you might have a suggestion as to how we could arrive at some kind of explanation by utilizing a mystic route to the solution, like perhaps something like a seance, or something. . ."

Anger leaped into her eyes as if it had been waiting egotistically just behind heavy-lashed eyelids. The third sentence, and he'd blown it.

"You want me to conduct a seance so you can talk with your lost love?!"

"I didn't mean it that way. Besides, a seance is just one of many possibilities."

"How, by the name of Lucifer, *did* you mean it?"

"I meant—well, let's face it, the seance's not such a bad idea. I mean, contact with a. . .a departed spirit is advisable in matters. . ."

"All I can say is you concoct a pretty wild story in order to gain a chat with your old girl friend!"

"Come on, Reba, make sense. I never thought someone so avidly devoted to the mystical experience could be so goddamned petty and—and unethereal."

"I haven't been at it long. I'm still a woman, too. It's your fault, anyway!"

"My fault?"

"You won't let me alone. You keep throwing reality in my face. How am I supposed to reach samedhi with you hanging like an albatross around my neck and shouting inconsequential matters into my ear?"

"That's a great picture, I mean the screaming albatross—but if I'm such a drag on your rise through the spheres, how come you stay here? How come you're so goddamned jealous?!"

"Because I love you!"

He tried to touch her. Frightened, like a little girl, she pushed back into the leather of the chair. She began to scream hysterically. She seemed,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kinot noted as he calmed her down, possessed by demons.

"You don't know how hard it has been to tell you I love you," Reba said when calmer. She spoke softly. "The words would be on my lips and I'd resist them. Love makes no sense for me. I should not love. I have no right to!"

"I don't understand."

"Every time I really feel deeply in love with you, a phrase comes to my mind and screws up my feelings. And it's so terribly comic. I would think, I love him with all my heart. Isn't that ridiculous? *All my heart.* Laugh."

He caressed her neck, her shoulders. The smell of incense had diminished. One of the candles had burned down to a wide lumpy puddle of wax. Kinot did not know what to say to her. She had not used the word love in so long that he, too, was unsure of its proper meanings. Did he still *love* Reba—in the fullest romantic sense anyway? For that matter, did he still *love* Carolyn? Bredeluch no doubt would enjoy discussing the relative meanings of the word in both situations. Kinot knew that his memory of Carolyn was heavily romanticized, embellished with pastels and glows which bore no relation to reality. They had been together for three years, only half as long as he'd known Reba. Surely his love for Reba *must* be the stronger emotion; it had the depth of maturity which his relationship with Carolyn had lacked. On the other hand, had Reba's withdrawal into mysticism dulled his love for her? Or was it some sort of dumb temporary pique?

And, hell, now he was doing the comparison bit involuntarily. One thing was sure: comparisons *were* ridiculous. Where is the common denominator in the comparison between the alive individual, whose presence contravened pleasant illusions, and a long-dead beauty who remained only as an unreal nymph of memory?

After a long silence, Reba said:

"You really want this seance? You think it's necessary?"

"I don't know. If there's anything to it, it might solve a few things."

"Exactly what I'm afraid of. Does it really make that much difference if a chimp can't control his human hands, or if a stuffy businessman is having his life jazzed up by some psychedelic visions? To *us*, I mean?"

Kinot shrugged. The last sitar record had played. The record player shut itself off with a series of loud clicks.

"All right," Reba said, "you'll get your seance. I know where's the best for the money. Call Bredeluch. Have the bastard join us."

Madame Electra's—Spiritual Consultation by Appointment—was, of course, on the thirteenth floor of a modern downtown office building. Kinot and Reba stepped from the elevator into a large reception room. It seemed as antiseptic-looking as any other large office, except for the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

design of a modernistic black widow spider in the center of the cream-colored back wall. At least ten secretaries were busily doing normal office work. Each of the girls, however, wore black dresses with floor length skirts. On each left breast was a blood-red ruby pin in the shape of a scarab.

Bredeluch waited for them by the receptionist's desk. He had evidently just whispered the punch line of one of his scatological jokes, for the receptionist was red-faced and giggling. When she recovered she led the three clients down a long corridor, past many cubicles, into a dark room which looked like any company's board meeting room, except for the spooky Moog synthesizer music wafting out of the Muzak system.

"Miss Carmilla will be with you in a moment," the receptionist said, and left.

"Miss Carmilla!" Bredeluch said. "Only Miss Carmilla? I thought with your connections, Reba, we'd rate Madame Electra at the very least."

"Oh, we'll get Madame Electra, too. Everybody does. She may be with us now."

"Ah-hah! Madame Electra's one of the spooks. What do they call them, a control, a contact in the spiritual world?"

"Not exactly, but you'll see."

Bredeluch strode around the room, inspecting what could be seen in the dim light.

"What a neat layout!" he said. "When did spiritualism go mod? Look, microphones, a whole electronic sound system built into the wall. TV screens, for God's sake! Or whoever's sake this involves."

"We do not deal with the devil any more, his setup is inferior to ours," came a businesslike but huskily deep voice from the doorway. Standing there was an extremely thin young woman wearing one of the black dresses. She had long black hair and bampirish features heightened by make-up.

"I am Miss Carmilla," she said, walking into the room. "My appointment sheet indicates that you have come to contact a dear departed. Let us proceed. Will you seat yourself at the center table please."

As they sat down, Bredeluch crossed his eyes to indicate his skepticism to Kinot.

"Dr. Bredeluch," Miss Carmilla said, "for the success of the seance, we ask that you try to contain your disbelief. Spirits are easily scared away by such simple alterations of mood as a joking comment or a funny face. Madame Electra does not require your faith in spiritualism, but she does need your cooperation."

Bredeluch apologized meekly. Miss Carmilla pressed a button on the side of the table. The few lights in the room clicked off, except for a dimly glowing dome in the table's center. This glow, coming from below Miss Carmilla's face, accented its gauntness, especially the dark hollow of the eyes and the angular rigidity of expression.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Before we continue," she said, "Madame Electra requests any additional data which might help us to establish contact with the deceased. She would especially like, in your own words, as much detail as you can recall of the circumstances of her death, information pertaining to any previous contacts or manifestations, and anything which our applications did not cover which you feel might be relevant to her identity. Speak clearly into the microphone, please."

In a shaky voice Kinot, leaning close to the mike, tried to fulfill the request. Afterward, Miss Carmilla said:

"Madame Electra will now meditate upon this information. She asks that you also apend this intervening time in private contemplation."

Miss Carmilla appeared to go into a trance. Bredeluch seemed to struggle to make his meditation obvious, probably to avoid further criticism.

"What's with this meditation bit?"

"It's just window dressing, I'm afraid. It allows Madame Electra time to set up."

"Set up? What kind of freak is this Madame Electra? Why does she conduct her seance from another room?"

"Madame Electra is a computer, my dear. We can't be in the room with her because it throws off the spiritual mood when the clients see a lot of key-punching, tape-spinning, and light-flashing. Also, she is able to conduct several seances at once. Right now, in our case, she is using the information you provided to search the Cooperative Memory Banks in Washington to obtain all available information about Carolyn, and about us."

"But—but how can a computer function as a medium?"

"Very efficiently. Not only is it free of the multiple character quirks which most mediums exhibit, it has of course the equivalent of fantastic powers of concentration. That's why it's so good at getting through to the spirit world; it cuts out all the distractions inherent in human awareness and obtains almost instant contact with the other side. By direct dialing, as it were."

"I—I can't conceive of an occult computer. It's impossible."

"That's because you're like all the realists in this world who can't see beyond the tips of their noses. Actually, it's only logical. Computers can be programmed to do anything. Madame Electra has simply been programmed to be the most efficient middleman between us and the spirit world. In my circles, although we do have our own reactionaries, it is generally agreed that Madame Electra will revolutionize the craft of spiritualism. There's a coven in New England who're moving heaven and hell, mostly hell, to get a computer of their own. But of course the government is suppressing the movement—well, you know how they are with anything that is antiestablishment. They find some way of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interfering with every request from an occult-based organization to link into the computer hookup. Madame Electra had slipped by, and they're allowing her continuance so long as the commercial aspect of the operation is accented. They're very upset at the idea that science may verify the existence of the supernatural."

The light in the middle of the table changed to red. Apparently the color was a signal to Miss Carmilla, who revived immediately and said:

"Everyone please notice that there are two handholds on the table in front of you. Please put a hand on each and prepare to concentrate."

"On these?" Bredeluch said. He seemed mystified by the instruction.

"Yes. These handholds link us together into a spiritual unity."

"I thought we were supposed to hold hands in a circle."

"That was the former custom, yes. In the old days. Concealed electrodes in each handhold function to scan the hands placed upon them. Not only do they effectively join us in spirit, they supply to Madame Electra important data such as the state of each person's emotions and whether any bodily function is being impaired as the seance progresses. A prime rule is that the seance must be halted immediately if any client's health or sanity is in danger."

"Sounds AMA-approved to me, Charles," Kinot said. Miss Carmilla glared at him a moment, then continued:

"Anyone taking a hand off the handhold will break the chain of contact and end the seance at that moment. Are we ready to begin? Everyone's hands comfortably on his handholds?"

They each muttered or grunted some kind of assent. In the flickering red light Kinot could see a quizzical expression on Bredeluch's face. He was obviously holding in satiric commentary and the strain showed.

"Clutch the handholds tightly, for we must all concentrate," Miss Carmilla said, her voice getting lower, her words spoken in unnatural rhythm. "Close your eyes, concentrate on Carolyn. Two of you knew her. Think of her as you knew her best. See the picture of her as you liked her best. Try to picture her hair, her eyes, her face, her body. See her doing something she did well."

Kinot hoped that Madame Electra did not read their minds, since at this minute she might scold him for pornography. But think of what she did best, that's what the lady said. Mustn't disappoint Miss Carmilla or Madame Electra. No, this is wrong. It is not cooperation. He changed his mental picture to one of Carolyn playing the piano. Free association, and suddenly there was The Ape banging out a tune. Kinot struggled to pull himself together, to cooperate. He had never suspected that a seance took so much mental effort. If only his mind were more disciplined, he could concentrate better. Yet, if he found it so difficult, then Bredeluch must be finding it impossible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kinot settled for a static portrait of Carolyn—She was just sitting and smiling—and tried to avoid the sad and ironic memories which came to the surface of his mind for brief moments.

A change of light registered on the inside of his eyelids. He felt tempted to open his eyes to see what the new color was. He resisted. His picture of Carolyn floated on air before him. Electricity seemed to flow up his arms from the handholds. Whatever it was, a charlatan's trick or real electric waves, it heightened the sense of unity, made hopeful the possibility of contact.

"Madame Electra has reached her control," Miss Carmilla said, her voice almost at bass level. "You may now slowly open your eyes."

The center light was now turquoise. It softened Miss Carmilla's features, accenting her paleness but smoothing her angularity and sending blue flashes through her hair.

"The control is almost with us. His name is Daniel. We will see him in a minute."

A screen in back of her lit up. The image on it appeared to be layers of mist, something like the resolution from a fringe-area station. Which to Kinot seemed logical, stations from the spirit world being outside the normal viewing area. Definitely hard to pick up without a powerful aerial.

Wondering why he was able to accept any of this, he glanced toward Reba. She stared at the screen as if it were now showing her favorite program. Bredeluch, as usual, wore a transparent mask over his skepticism. Kinot could understand Reba's rapture—she immersed herself in this sort of bilge every day—but what kind of sane man would believe this operation? A computer instead of a nice fat old medium, a TV screen replacing the ethereal manifestation of the visiting spirit—everything was too explainable. Even if you dug the occult, wouldn't this setup have odd vibrations? Where was the mystery? The sense of wonder?

"Everyone, call mentally to Daniel," chanted Miss Carmilla. "Make known in your mind your desire to contact him. Daniel is one of the most sensitive controls. He must feel wanted before he will agree to cooperate. Think: Daniel, please come, we much desire to speak with you. . ."

Bredeluch almost burst out laughing. He shot a look at Kinot which could have been sliced into layers of sarcasm. Kinot felt rather silly himself. He looked at Reba. Obviously she was following instructions. She was mentally calling out to Daniel, the moody contact. Her eyes were glazed.

The light in the table changed to scarlet.

"Madame Electra will speak," Miss Carmilla said in her lowest voice yet.

Bredeluch's cheeks puffed out slightly, and the corners of his mouth vibrated. His cheery feeling was infectious. Kinot had to struggle to keep from forming a return smile. The handholds seemed to tingle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Could they get away with shooting an electrical charge into your hand, Kinot wondered.

"Unanimous cooperation is not fully engaged," came a voice from a speaker located beneath the table. The voice, Madame Electra's obviously, was flat but showed an intensity deeper than that of most computers. "Even if you are a cynical disbeliever, please perform the minimum asked of you to insure the success of this contact."

Kinot and Bredeluch exchanged glances. They'd never been chastised by a computer before. Both sensed the absurdity of it. The melody, if that's what it could be called, of the song coming from the Muzak system rumbled uneasily in a low vibrato, adding to the effect. They certainly seemed intent on giving the client his money's worth, Kinot thought. Guess we can do *our* part.

"We'll try harder," he said, addressing Miss Carmilla since it seemed ridiculous to apologize to a computer vocal outlet on the floor. "Won't we, Charles?"

Bredeluch nodded. As if to verify his sincerity, white knuckles showed that he had tightened his grip on the handholds.

"Thank you," said Madame Electra. "I sense your new-found cooperation already."

The table light softened to a gloomy dark purple. The volume of the music also diminished slightly and changed to a piece of chamber-music which Kinot recognized as an adaptation from Stravinsky.

"That's fine, Daniel," Madame Electra whispered. "Of course I'm glad to see you again."

On the screen a human figure began to form. Kinot saw that Miss Carmilla was in full trance; her body swayed very slowly from side to side. He turned to Reba. Her body moved like Miss Carmilla's, but her face was different. Her trance was less serene; there was an element of fright in her wide eyes.

"Why, I call upon you as often as I can, Daniel. We have no prejudice or bias against you. We call on you as often as any other control. I can prove that to you, Daniel. I can supply tangible figures. In life you were an accountant. You should appreciate the truth if it comes to you in numbers. We need you now, Daniel. Please appear. Please."

Daniel's outline became distinct. He was either a very thin man, or an elongated specter. The details of his face were fuzzy, no single feature clear at any one time, but the overall effect suggested a gaunt sad face with few redeeming features.

"That's a good fellow, Daniel," Madame Electra said. Kinot smiled, amused by the medium-computer's choice of phrase. No one else seemed to notice. Reba and Miss Carmilla remained in trance. Bredeluch was intensely concentrating on being serious, in this situation a monumental task for him.

"Daniel lived in the early twentieth century," Miss Carmilla whispered, without stirring from her trance. "He was one of the first

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

victims of a hit and run accident, killed by a flivver in a New York City side street sometime in 1911. He was a young man on his way home from the diligent overtime he put in regularly as a bookkeeper in a sweatshop. He still refuses to accept his death, even after so many years. He rarely speaks. He communicates with Madame Electra in other ways."

Kinot noted that Miss Carmilla reeled off the information like a stewardess reciting a lunch menu. Maybe she was computerized, too. Press the right button, and background information surged out of her memory banks. He instructed himself to concentrate harder.

"Daniel, today we search for Miss Carolyn Eaton, a dear departed of some six years' residence in your world." Madame Electra then proceeded to supply Daniel with relevant data to help his part of the task. Daniel said nothing, but emitted a moan of assent from time to time. His image kept going in and out of resolution. If he had appeared in the room like that, he might have been quite convincing. However, on the wall he appeared entrenched in a movie sequence, badly directed. Maybe a zoom shot onto his face, revealing gaping holes for eyes, might help the atmosphere, throw a good scare into the clientele. What kind of an outfit was this, going about a seance with crisp efficiency and no spooky side effects?

Reba seemed in pain. Her face contorted, she held herself stiffly. Afraid something might be wrong, he removed his hand from the handhold, intending to touch her arm. Immediately the light in the center changed to bright yellow, and both sound and picture faded from the TV. It was as if God or somebody had pulled the plug to halt this unnatural tampering with His domain.

"Put your hand back," Miss Carmilla ordered, her eyes wide open and clear. "By releasing your hand you've broken the connection to the spirit world."

So it really was a substitute for the old holding-hands-in-a-circle ploy. Another medium's trick to blame the failure of a seance on the client himself. Perhaps then this operation was not so different from the old-fashioned kind located in musty old houses rather than streamlined office buildings. Reba, out of her trance, scowled at him. Satisfied that she was all right, he slowly, with a theatrical deliberateness, placed his hand back on the handhold. Miss Carmilla nodded approval. Bright yellow changed back to gloomy purple. The TV screen flashed on again. Daniel was still there, waiting like an actor for the turning on of the spotlight.

"We lost contact for a moment, Daniel," said Madame Electra. "Thank you for waiting, dear one."

Considerate little bitch, this computer. Serene background music reinforced her comforting tones. How could Daniel put up with such childish, patronizing treatment?

The center light began to flicker ominously.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mr. Kinot," said Miss Carmilla, "it is indicated that some difficulty in maintaining contact with the other side is caused by the skeptical wanderings of your mind. We appreciate your difficulty, but Madame Electra is extremely sensitive and wishes that you would set your mind in a more serious mood. Then the emanations from your emotional and mental systems which she picks up would not interfere with her concentration. She needs you especially because you have the fullest knowledge of the dear departed we seek in the spirit world."

"I'm sorry," he muttered and looked toward Reba to see if she joined in on the chastisement. Apparently she was indifferent, for her eyes were again filmy. He grabbed the handholds with all the strength he could muster, held on for dear life, and attempted to force the image of Carolyn to take over his mind.

On the TV screen Daniel's body began to fade. Fog enveloped him.

"Daniel knows of Carolyn Eaton," Madame Electra said. "She is one of the disturbed ones, a spirit never at rest. She is considered uncooperative, nervous. Her only goal, Daniel says, is to return to life, to earth, and she refuses the consolation of the spirit world. Even at this late date she offers pacts to the devil. She may speak with us, she may not. At any rate, we must increase our output of concentration. We must contemplate with new energy. We must not admit sardonic thoughts to nullify our desire to see and talk with the departed one again. We must show her how deeply we want her to appear. Daniel is only a carrier of messages, he cannot make her come to us. Concentrate. Meditate. Contemplate."

They all stared intently at the screen. Except for Miss Carmilla, who seemed more in trance than ever. Her body shuddered. Her breathing was uneven. The light softened to a dismal pastel version of its former purple color. The music, cerebral in melody, was controlled by an insistent rhythm. Kinot closed his eyes and methodically tried to sketch a portrait of Carolyn. He started with her hair, remembered it loose, slightly mussed up after one of her energetic outbursts which she performed deliberately to counter her natural physical weakness. Blue eyes with elongated mysterious corners, small mouth, unusual paleness. He had difficulty recalling her nose. Was it straight, or did it slightly turn up at the tip? How could he forget something like that? He must have traced its outline with his fingertips at least a hundred times. A hundred times a hundred years ago. He saw her body, lithe in movement; artful when naked. He thought of her moving toward him, cutting across a window-shaped path of moonlight on the bedroom floor. At the back of his neck he felt a cold touch of jealousy, as if Reba were reading his mind right this minute. To hell with you, my darling. You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dig this black arts trip, you let me hallucinate my way. He brought back Carolyn to the edge of the shining moonlight.

"Daniel says she hears," Madame Electra said. A small crescendo of joy crossed the ominous Muzak melody.

Kinot opened his eyes and saw the drifting image of Daniel on the TV screen, looking as laconic as ever.

"Daniel says she will come. Soon, any moment. On the other side movement is not easy. The disturbed spirit rides the waves of memory into our presence."

Kinot got a brief flash of ghosts rocking down from the sky on surfboards. Not wanting another scolding from Madame Electra, he quickly re-established his concentration on the figure of Carolyn, who had now crossed the moonlight and run into his arms.

The light became darker. Miss Carmilla began a quiet guttural moan. Kinot looked at Reba, who seemed even more authentically in trance than Miss Carmilla. Reba's eyes seemed made of marble. She breathed rapidly. Her body trembled.

On the screen Daniel moved, with some politeness, out of the picture. The color of the mist altered, a hint of vermilion spotted through the dull grey. At first the new color seemed to speckle the screen in random dots, something like the motes of red on an inoperative color-TV channel. Then the specks began to form, to resolve into a shape. Other dots of color became noticeable. A face slowly came into focus. Carolyn's face. The vermilion was the red of her hair, a not too accurate representation. Perhaps the light on the other side glowed differently. Or perhaps the memory bank down in Washington did not supply such mundane details as intensity of color. It was a good mock-up, though, if that's what it was. At the very least, Madame Electra had pieced together a reasonable facsimile of Carolyn.

The unearthly aspect was well-handled, too. The red hair moved languidly, stirred by an unfelt breeze. With her eyes closed tightly, she reminded Kinot of a corpse floating on the surface of water. While his mind conducted a painstaking skeptical analysis, his emotions responded unrationally. He caught his breath at her well-remembered beauty, seemingly alive again. Feelings he had forgotten even in his exaggerated memories of her surged again through his body. Especially the way that he had always wanted to touch her face, this face, to prove its existence, to verify her love for him as something more than the wild production of a hyperactive fantasy life. His heart beat faster. Anticipation activated every nerve in his body.

Reba—how did she feel? What did she think, staring at this ghost of the beautiful girl who had extended her life span, who had saved her life, yet was the source of a jealousy which had made out of her a *living* ghost dabbling in occult trivia. He could not look. He feared that, if he turned away, some ethereal chain link would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be broken, and he would again lose sight of Carolyn.

"We know you are with us, Carolyn Eaton," Madame Electra said. Electronics had rendered the ritual utterance with redundancy. Whoever programmed the Muzak system was inspired in his choice of music for the entrance of the spirit. Its song was regal, but the Moog synthesizer provided a proper ghostliness as counterpoint. Although he was overjoyed at seeing Carolyn again, Kinot nevertheless felt manipulated in thought, mood, and emotion by the electronic stimulants in the computerized seance system. The analytical portion of his mind, or perhaps fear, came up with an absurd longing for an unrecognizable disembodied head floating above a dirty sheet and illuminated from below by a candle.

Yet—this was, or seemed to be, Carolyn. And she was here. And she was now. And what the hell did the method of illusion matter?

"We on earth have sensed your disturbances, Carolyn," Madame Electra continued, "and wish to help you. With me and Miss Carmilla is your friend, Lawrence Kinot; a doctor who participated in your final operation, Dr. Charles Bredeluch; and the recipient of your living heart, Mrs. Reba Kinot."

"Larry's wife," the image of Carolyn said. "Larry's wife."

Granted the expected ghostliness, Carolyn's voice was exactly as Kinot remembered it. An easy Northern drawl, verging often upon a whisper.

"I have visited Larry's wife many times," Carolyn said.

"I know," whispered Reba. Her voice trembled; she seemed about to cry.

"I feel your fear, Larry's wife. You have always trembled when I came. You are afraid of me."

"Yes."

"I find that. . .delightful."

Carolyn smiled. With her eyes still closed, she appeared to be in the middle of a pleasant dream. From her point of view, perhaps that's what this was.

"Larry's wife," Carolyn said. "I see again in my mind's eye that you are not half as pretty as I was. As pretty as I was before they mutilated me."

"It was not mutilation," Bredeluch said. "You gave your permission."

"Excuse me, doctor. I did not intend to impute the honor of the profession. There are some things men *are* meant to tamper with, and I was one of them."

Kinot was glad that Carolyn seemed calm. Yet there had been no reason to expect hysterics. She had always been rational in life; why should she be any different now?

"No, the mutilation was not intended by the medical profession. It saved lives. How can I, who used my body insignificantly, complain about the way it was distributed to others? Yet it did turn out to be mutilation, doctor, a kind of mutilation of the soul, if you like. In the spirit world I am not whole. I am

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sort of a floating jigsaw puzzle awaiting the next piece to stop functioning and bring me closer to rest—to what you who still live call eternal rest, though I am told it is not exactly what we thought it was."

The music, apparently controlled by shifts in the situational mood, was now serene.

"I don't understand what you mean, Carolyn," Bredeluch said, his voice full of the scientific method. "Do you mean that transplantings affect the dead person adversely, forcing him into a type of limbo in which he must wait for the organs he has donated to also die?"

"Something like that, doctor. I wouldn't exactly call it limbo. Limbo is empty. Limbo is mental unawareness. Limbo is a stick to dance under. I am definitely not in limbo. If you need some sort of Judaeo-Christian reference, I am in hell, I suppose. I am fully conscious and tormented. Put another way, I suppose I am in a kind of waiting room of eternity, waiting for the rest of me to die."

"Each time one of your organs dies," Bredeluch said, "it—it—how shall I put it?—it floats heavenward and reconnects with your body?"

"Although the information service hereabouts is rather skimpy, I believe that is a more or less accurate way of explaining it."

Kinot looked at Bredeluch. Bredeluch looked at Kinot. Simultaneously they tried to keep a straight face. They could not. Both burst out laughing at the same time.

Also, at the same time, Reba began to scream, as if she understood something else.

"Stop it, Reba!" Kinot shouted. He removed his hands from the handholds and reached for her. His movement disconnected the link with the spirit world. The screen went blank. Madame Electra's voice rose in admonitory exclamations which Kinot did not listen to.

He shook Reba out of her screaming, out of her trance. But her eyes glowed with fear.

"What's the matter?" Kinot said.

"I'm afraid. I know what she wants. I know what she is going to try to do."

"Easy, Larry," Bredeluch said. "She's prone to believe this sort of claptrap, you know. Don't fool around with her emotions when she's in this state."

"Claptrap?!" said Madame Electra. Her voice, though still obviously an electronic manifestation, sounded offended.

"Fraud might be the better word for it," Bredeluch said.

"Disbeliever! Throughout the ages the logical man, the scientific man, has been the enemy of truth, the persecutor of the inner revelation. For centuries we've had to dress up the so-called black arts with spooky falderal: floating sheets, incense, toads' eyes. Now that the existence of supernatural phenomena has some scientific basis, you still scream claptrap!"

Bredeluch began to wave his fist. Kinot noticed that he resembled a Balkan villager with a flaming torch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You display electronic paraphernalia and call it proof? That's madness! You think you can put up a TV screen and convince your McLuhanized clientele that the ghostly manifestation is authentic? You think you're still not dressing up the black arts?"

"Charles. . ." Kinot said. He still held Reba, whose body shook violently.

"I know you, doctor," said Madame Electra. "I know your personality patterns, your cynicism and your tendency to scream bloody murder when your logic is threatened. Before we started, I had projected an 88.47 probability that you would disrupt this seance somewhere along the way with an unnecessary emotional outburst."

"You can shove your probability into your input slot! This is pure charlatanism!"

"Charles. . ." Kinot said.

"If you continue in this cheap emotionalism, Dr. Bredeluch, you will cause your contact with Carolyn to be broken, perhaps forever."

"Machine or not, you haven't lost your sense of cheap ploys! The medium always blames failure on the client, that's number one in the rule book, isn't it?"

"Charles. . ."

"What is it, Larry? You going to side with this charlatan?"

"Charles, you're arguing with a machine. A combination of tapes, buttons, and transistors. You're calling a computer a mad witch. Who is mad and who isn't around here?"

"Oh, yeah, right, Larry, right, 'course you're right," Bredeluch said gruffly. Red-faced, he sat down.

Reba had calmed down. Lines of tears ran down from the corners of her eyes. Kinot held her close.

"If the clients will cooperate, please," said Miss Carmilla, "Madame Electra requests that you resume your positions. While you have broken contact, she has been able to maintain it with the subject."

"Probably put Carolyn on 'hold'," Bredeluch muttered.

"On the contrary, doctor, there is no way we can force the subject to remain after the breaking of human contact. The subject stays with us through the force of her own will. However, the threads into the spirit world are tenuous, and we must resume immediately."

"We'll take the chance," Kinot said. "We will not begin again until my wife has recovered, and only at her wish."

"It's okay, Larry," Reba said. "I'm all right. I know what she wants, that's all. But I must hear her out. It's my only chance."

"Your only chance. What's going on? We're getting out of here. I'm not going to—"

"No, Larry, please! We must continue. If you love me, please. . ."

She began to tremble again.

"Reba," he said, "you're not functioning logically. . ."

"Careful, Larry," Bredeluch said. "Her condition right now is too fragile. Better do what she says."

Kinot felt helpless. Science and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mysticism together urged that the seance go on. Yet, as the unscientific rationalist, he opposed them. Instinct said no, logic said no, sheer panic said no. Kinot said:

"All right, let's get on with the bloody thing."

He eased Reba back onto her chair. Her hands reached reluctantly, as if endowed like The Ape's hands with a mind of their own, for the electronic handholds. Kinot returned to his seat, waited for Bredeluch to resume position before he put his own hands in place.

The human link rejoined, the system went into immediate operation. The TV screen hummed and switched on. The Muzak chose a new, especially ominous melody. Miss Carmilla went into instant trance. Carolyn's face, serene and smiling, reappeared. Madame Electra, who had apparently been communicating with Carolyn on another circuit, resumed as if there had been no interruption.

"The subject has indicated that she would prefer communicating with Mr. Kinot instead of Dr. Bredeluch."

Bredeluch looked hurt. Kinot glanced at Reba, whose face still showed fear. She smiled helplessly, as if saying she could be of no help to him. He turned his head toward the screen. Carolyn also smiled, but hers was self-confident, even a bit sinister. Or do sinister smiles come automatically with being a ghost?

"You may speak, Mr. Kinot," Madame Electra said.

He looked to Bredeluch for help, but Bredeluch wasn't sending any.

"All right," Kinot said. "Should I question, or what?"

"Whatever your prefer," said Miss Carmilla.

Kinot tightened his grip on the handholds. The light in the center of the table had deepened in color. The music had slowed to a funereal tempo, as if taunting him, as if hinting that now his turn had come.

"Well, uh, I guess I don't know what to say."

Carolyn's smile widened.

"All right then, uh, what's it like. . .over there?"

"Dismal. Insubstantial. Existentially lonely. But it gets better."

"What do you mean, better?"

"Better. My time is coming. Soon I'll have what I want, and I'll turn my back completely on your world, and look forever at the stars. At least I hope sincerely that it is soon. Haunting requires an entirely different personality from mine, my dear. I see the absurdity of the situation much too easily to keep up a good scare. Except when I'm with Reba, her I haunt with enthusiasm."

Looking at Reba, Kinot said:

"Are you all right? You want me to continue with this, this—"

"Yes. Yes, please. My only chance is for you to go on."

"Why do you keep saying *only chance?* Why can't we just zip out of here, go home and have a drink, get a good night's sleep?"

"Larry. . ." Bredeluch said, in cautionary tones.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It is my only chance," Reba said. "I can fight her, I think. But I must verify what she is doing, why she's doing it. Even then it may be too late."

He turned back to Carolyn's image. Her smile was gone.

"That was touching," she said.

"I love her," Kinot said.

"I hope you do. I surely hope you do."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing I can easily define. Your love for Reba seems to help her when I do my haunting thing. I get nowhere when you're in that kinky room with her. Then I'm just a bored onlooker, waiting for her to be alone and get into one of her groovy moods, at which time I'm really effective. Right, Reba?"

"Yes."

"Lately, though, it's been easier. Your, shall we say, fiery ardor has slipped closer to the coals and would be minuscule except for all the smoke it sends up. You don't love her as much, do you, Larry?"

Kinot turned to Reba.

"It's not true. I do love you."

"It doesn't matter," Reba whispered.

"That's a lie, Larry. It does matter. It matters to her deeply. In the loneliness of her room she sings to you love mantras. Very romantic. But not very effective, apparently."

"I do love you," Kinot said, but this time in a weaker voice. The old questions bombarded his mind. Since Reba had been isolating herself more often in that room, his feeling for her had become, at least, more confused. He wanted her as she used to be, not as a female guru with forbidden avocations. What had caused her original withdrawl? Was it his fault? Had she sensed his lingering affection for Carolyn's memory, feared it, and retreated from him? Or were the beginnings of their separation her fault, caused because she placed her interest in mystical matters above her love for him? Or was it somehow a mixture of many motives, an unnecessary drawing-apart resulting from mutual misunderstandings? Since their relationship definitely had changed for the worse, the awful questioned remained: *did* he love her? But at the present moment he was too concerned about Reba's obvious fear to answer such questions. He turned back to Carolyn. "I do love her," he said, and his voice was weaker still. As he looked at Carolyn, as her beautiful face suggested a thousand memories, the whole subject of love became too complex, too difficult to analyze in such an emotional moment. He had loved Carolyn once and at that time thought she had taught him all there was to know about love. Nothing could have been more exciting than life with Carolyn. They ran streaks down lovers lanes, met every opportunity of life with abundant energy. Later he saw the tiredness she tried to hide, felt the shuddering in her exhausted body, watched as paleness became permanent. He traced all the stages of her death. He learned that grown men do cry. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never criticized sentimental movies again. Immediately after her death he wished that he had also died. For all intents and purposes, the dramatic part of his life was over. Then he'd met Reba. All right, at first it was a rebound situation, but later it was love, he'd been sure of that. He had once loved Carolyn, and he now loved Reba. Equality of emotion, wasn't it guaranteed by the constitution? Or was one love greater than the other? If so, which one? Which the hell one?

As if she'd been listening to his thoughts, Carolyn asked:

"Do you love her strongly? As much as you oved me?"

"Yes," he said, his voce barely audible.

"*More* than you loved me?"

"Drop it, please."

"Why should I?"

"You really enjoy this, don't you? You always did like provoking arguments between people. I'd forgotten that. At the time I found it charming. Maybe because you never tried those tricks on me."

The Muzak's present melody grated on his nerves. Kinot gripped the handholds tightly, like a pilot engineering a crash landing.

"You always were adamant at maintaining poses, Larry. You fooled me often, I'm sure. But now it is different. I can slip through the eyeholes of your mask. Your plastic painted mask. I have danced in your dreams, my dear. I have followed you to far-off lands and allowed you to wrest me from the clutches of cigar-smoking dragons. I've visited your dreams, one of the fringe benefits of the spirit world."

Bredeluch's mouth had fallen open, he looked like a statue to incredulity. Miss Carmilla, deep in trance, seemed to copy Carolyn's sardonic smile.

"It's true," Kinot said to Bredeluch. "I do dream of her sometimes, and usually in adventurous settings. How could that be extracted from a memory bank in Washington?"

"If it's from the FBI," Bredeluch whispered in a shaky voice, "I'm taking the next flight out to Calcutta."

"I *do* dream of her," Kinot said to Reba. "I'm sorry."

"There's no reason to be sorry," she said. Her voice sounded raspy, as if her throat muscles were constricted.

"There is. Because I kept my dreams of Carolyn from you."

"Don't be silly. In dreams I cheated on you dozens of times, with bearded sages who bought my body with wisdom."

Her admission would have soothed him if it had not been delivered in such a tense voice, and with so much fear in her eyes. Kinot realized that his self-pitying confessions were of little help to Reba right now. She didn't give a damn about them.

"Tell us how you lied before," Carolyn said. "Tell how very little you really love Reba now."

"That's not true. You are trying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to interpret a muddled, altered truth, one that's been complicated by the passing of time, as a lie. It is not!"

"Groovy comment, Larry, you put your breaths in all the right places. But it's a lie, too. You're all lies. Lie to me. Tell me how you loved me in the great bye and bye before you started comparing hawks with handsaws."

"You know I loved you. Deeply. Don't you remember?"

"Sure, baby, sure. I remember a few minutes of love. A minute here, a minute there. I also remember tedious times when nothing of any significance happened. Like we sat silent on that fire escape, neither of us contributing a sensible word to the furtherance of anything. Like we spent *hours* on dinners which I threw together and you pretended to enjoy. Like I waited in dismal places for you to show up, on your way from other dismal places."

"So we made poor use of our time together, you think that's unusual?"

"No, you just tend to remember things a bit harshly on this side. The lover left behind romanticizes the loving moments, remembers them as more abundant than they were. The dead one, with so few distractions, isolates the good times, reduces them to shadows of their actuality. Trouble is, I still love you, Larry, even after microscopic examinations of our life together. And you, you drifted so easily to Reba. . ."

"You expected me to keep your memory sacred, is that it?"

"Yes."

In life Carolyn had never made him angry. Not that he remembered. At this moment he was furious.

"The problem was that I died so frigging sentimentally. Remember that moment? You and I in the apartment and the pains suddenly coming to my head and me knowing I was heading for the last roundup, etc., etc. I remember the very last moment of consciousness, as we both heard the wail of the ambulance siren coming down a faraway street and turning a corner toward us, and you looked so desperate and I was so filled with a Greer Garson/Ali McGraw type of courage. You tried to comfort me. I recall thinking how sweet you were, to be *so* compassionate at the moment of crisis. Hah! You were probably contemplating your next affair as you turned me over to the ambulance attendants."

"That's not true! At that moment I didn't know whether I wanted to go on living. What did you expect from me, anyway?"

"A short period of mourning, that's all. Something to make me feel my life meant something to you, that I was not a discard so that you could draw for a better hand."

"You idiot, you're jealous!"

Carolyn laughed.

"Did that just dawn on you now?"

Kinot looked at Bredeluch, who shrugged his shoulders. The Muzak played a neutral tune. Miss Carmilla swayed her body in a circular motion. Reba stared at the screen, her body tense.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Naturally I'm jealous. Why shouldn't I be? She is the other woman, the woman in whose face I saw the transference of your love. I watched it grow until it became unbearable, and I had to interfere."

"Interfere?"

"Sure, baby. After the operation something made her turn to occult matters, as you are painfully aware. At first she used the black arts to hold on to you. She fed you love potions and sang love prayers in an annoying off-key voice."

Kinot looked at Reba for confirmation of what Carolyn said. She nodded without looking at him.

"So, since she was, ah, susceptible to unearthly influences, I began to visit her constantly. I worked certain little tricks to change her mood, to let her withdraw into her egotistical little self, to give her king-size bring-downs. A bit mean of me, but that's what she got for fiddling with tarot cards instead of bridge cards like a normal suburban housewife."

"Goddamn you!" Kinot shouted, his face red with anger. "That's... that's heartless!"

Carolyn began to laugh again. Then Bredeluch got the point and, although he attempted to stifle it, added his laughter. They seemed like conspirators.

"Of course I'm heartless, dear. That's the point. And it's also problem number two. As I said, my afterlife has been somewhat complicated by your record transplant operation, Dr. Bredeluch. Your forensical specialists were quite right when they used to worry about the legality of death—you know, when they worried about whether a person was legally dead if his brain had stopped functioning but other parts of the body had not? Well, you worked it out for your world, but not for mine. Although legally dead by your terms, I am not quite dead by other terms. Part of me still lives so long as that lung breathes in air, those eyes look about them, and that heart beats so rapidly in Reba's chest. In the spirit world I have been adjudged as not yet legally dead."

"That's nonsense!" cried Bredeluch.

"Name your proof," answered Carolyn. "Cite a relevant source."

Bredeluch pouted. Carolyn smiled.

"You see, doctor, a ghost is merely unfinished business, a person who's died when not ready or with some important goal unfulfilled. Normally they refuse to believe they are dead and tend to roam about the places they haunted in life. Some are eventually calmed, others go spooking for centuries. A few are evicted by exorcisers, which is unkind but effective. My case is somewhat unique on this side, but not unknown. I will continue as a ghost until all of me is legally dead, then I can be accepted into further realms, wherever they may be. You see, a ghost, not being *really* dead, does not know what death is or will be. I am getting impatient. The lung is weak, planted in an old man, and will not last much longer. My eyes will die

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soon. Right now a gentleman in Brazil is in a final coma brought on by fright. Fright, I might say, at a few kinky visions I sent his way. And my hands are now crossed on Rex's unbreathing breast. . ."

Kinot looked at Bredeluch, who nodded.

"True," he said. "Rex died this afternoon, not long after you left. Just keeled over. For obvious reasons, I didn't want to tell you or Reba just yet."

"You should have."

"Maybe, but things were getting too spooky for me. One thing is sure: only myself and my assistants knew Rex had died. There is no way Madame Electra's outfit could've found out."

Carolyn appeared as serene as ever. The half smile was still there.

"Carolyn, what do you want?"

"I want out. I want an escape from this stupid half life that has part of me reaching for peace while the rest of me lingers on pointless ineffective hauntings. I'm tired of spooking Reba, of causing hallucinations for my living eyes, of sending telegrams through a chimpanzee. I want to forget you, Larry; I want to stop remembering lackluster highlights of life with a man who would rather forget me, who remembers me as sort of an adventurous, clever moll in his dreams. I can't stand watching myself fade to second place. I want to die completely. I want to die."

Carolyn now talked faster, with increased emotion. Reba gasped. Miss Carmilla shuddered. The piped-in music became more frantic. The light in the center of the table lightened, changed to pink.

Kinot did not know what to do, what to say. He had never seen Carolyn act like this when she was alive; so he had no idea how to handle her.

"You've got to understand, Larry. I don't want to do what I have to do, what Reba knows I have to do. There's no other way. She's had six extra years of life, six years she wouldn't have had if it weren't for the operation. She's made good use of them, there's no need for her to regret. But she must die. It is necessary."

"No!" Kinot shouted.

Reba screamed. The blood had drained from her face. The music had gone atonal, insane. The table light changed to an intense flashing red.

Kinot let go of the handholds and took Reba by the arm. At the same moment, the voice of Madame Electra bellowed through the room.

"The seance has reached a danger point. Adverse emanations come from the spirit world. The seance must be terminated. It must be terminated."

Kinot tried to pry Reba's hand off its handhold, but she held on tighter, her body riveted in fright. Bredluch came to Kinot's aid. Reba continued to scream. The face of Carolyn, smiling, remained on the screen.

Miss Carmilla came out of her trance. She whirled around, looked up at the TV screen. She made some fright noises unbecoming to a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spiritualist. Turning back to the table, she flipped up a hidden panel and started to press buttons.

"This seance must terminate," Madame Electra said again.

"What's wrong?" Bredeluch shouted at Miss Carmilla.

"She must die, Larry," cried Carolyn. "Let it happen."

"This is impossible," Miss Carmilla said, as she tried a new combination of buttons.

"*What's* impossible?"

Clearly trying to control herself, Miss Carmilla measured out her words:

"Contact with the spirit world is maintained through the special programmed abilities of Madame Electra. Among other things, she is programmed to make the connection with the other side, conduct the seance itself, monitor it for any deviations from the norm, and break the contact if something goes wrong in the spirit world or in the seance room. At the moment that light began to flash red alert, our link to the spirit world was broken, *should* have been broken. Sometimes the loss of contact isn't immediate; the subject spirit tends to fade away. As you see, the spirit of Carolyn Eaton is still present. Madame Electra is now trying every means at her command to terminate the seance."

Although Kinot and Bredeluch forced her hands to loosen their grip, Reba's body remained stiff, tense. Wild things happened in her eyes.

"Why don't you pull the plug on the whole operation?" Bredeluch hollered. "Turn off the TV screen?"

"It *is* off! When I emerged from trance, I took care of that. I turned off everything in this room that is adjunct to the seance process. Everything is still running! This has never happened before. I don't know what to do."

"Call someone from the outside."

"I tried. That button, the alarm, is not working."

Atypically, Miss Carmilla was on the verge of tears. Her vampirish make-up seemed a mask hiding her femininity.

"Reba, come out of it," Kinot whispered. "You don't have to fight her."

"Yes," Carolyn said. "She does."

"I must," Reba whispered.

The voice of Madame Electra, mechanically repeating the same phrase, sounded futile. Bredeluch massaged Reba's wrist with both his hands. In the red light they all looked like apparitions, as if they stood at the brink of hell.

"Let's get the hell out of here," Kinot shouted.

"No!" Reba said. "It won't do any good to leave. I can't."

Kinot tried to pull her out of her chair, but he could not budge her.

"How does it feel, Reba, *Mrs.* Kinot?" Carolyn said. "My heart, I mean. Are you conscious of it beating inside your chest, fast, so fast? My heartbeat was always faster than most. Maybe because it was helping to compress the span of my life into its goddamned short length."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Carmilla continued to push buttons. Bredeluch, with scientific method, kicked the wall below the TV screen. If anything, the image of Carolyn became clearer.

"The heart pounds now, doesn't it?" Carolyn said, her voice louder, more emotional. "It makes a hollow sound, as if there's nothing else in your breast. As if lungs, tissue, and bones have dissolved, leaving only the heart to send its sound across the dark cavern."

Reba, her hands clutching her chest, began to gasp for air. Kinot grabbed her.

"Come out of it. Don't listen to her. She can't hurt you."

"Yes, I can," said Carolyn.

Reba, staring at the TV screen, struggled to control herself. She stopped gasping, forced breath back into her body. Her slender body visibly shook.

"Never knew a heart could beat so fast, did you? I know. I found out in those last moments of consciousness when I knew for sure I was going to die. While Larry looked down on me so lovingly. My heart beat with the speed of one of those drills they tear up streets with. Like it is beating now inside you. And there's sad-eyed Larry, again looking down lovingly, playing his role superbly, with the acting talent that informs every day of his life. But don't worry about him, Reba darling. He'll survive after you're dead. He's the type. Why, the instant way he recovers after tragedy, he'll probably be making eyes at the beautiful Miss Carmilla as the attendants carry your corpse from this room."

"You're insane!" Kinot screamed.

"There's no such thing as insanity after death."

Reba, breathing with obvious difficulty, tried to stand up but fell back to her chair. Kinot tried to think of something to say, but he could not. Instead, he stood in front of Reba, his mouth half open, his expression almost as dazed as hers.

"Larry," Carolyn said, "look at me."

He tried to resist the lure of her voice, which still sounded lovely in spite of everything.

"Larry! Look at *me! Now!"*

The tension in her voice made him obey. Her smile had broadened. It was a smile of victory.

Slowly, for the first time, she opened her eyes. The eyelids seemed to raise like a curtain, gradually revealing a brightly lit stage. Her eyes shone unnaturally. Always beautiful, they seemed now a more intense blue, as if to counteraffect the brightness surrounding them and the deep black of their pupils. She stared at Kinot. He took an involuntary step backwards.

Looking at her now, almost overpowered by the sarcastic smile and the sardonic light in her eyes, Kinot recalled several separate moments when she had gazed at him just like that. Over a wine glass. Beside a fireplace, its glow making her eyes shine as they did now. On a power boat skidding across Georgian Bay, her arms trying to protect her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new coiffure from the continuous spray of water. Often, when she was driving, the glance came after a witty remark. In a musty dark hallway with party-sounds coming from all the surrounding rooms. Many times, many places. He could not even recall the occasions, only the look.

Before, he had never seen the destruction in it.

"Step back, Larry," Carolyn said. "It's time to wrap this up."

Now she stared at Reba. Her voice drowned out the stuttering repetitions of Madame Electra and the disjointed background music. Reba looked at Kinot. For help? To blame? He could not tell.

"Don't fight it, Reba," Carolyn said. "I'm genuinely sorry about this—" She laughed abruptly. "I almost said I'm sorry to be an Indian giver. I told you I was not exactly brilliant at haunting. But you don't appreciate jokes just now, do you, Reba? Not with your heart pounding like crazy, not with pains shooting out from it in all directions over your chest, not when the air becomes lodged in your lungs and you can't push it out."

Reba stared at Carolyn's image, as if hypnotized by the glowing eyes. She had stopped struggling.

"I believed. . .I thought I could fight you," Reba whispered.

"And you can't."

"I'll. . .try!"

"So try. Try to overcome the pain, the suffocation. Your mouth feels dry now, doesn't it? Look at you, you keep trying to swallow."

"All that studying. . .no good. . . for this."

"You're grabbing at straws, Reba. Give in. There's no way. You think you have a chance because of all your damned fiddling with the mystic arts. You think you can recall something from one of those fine-print books, a spell or chant which will break my power. I can see the nonsense syllables forming on your lips. They're no good, Reba, not even for scat singing with a small combo."

Carolyn laughed again.

"You don't know enough. Your taste for the occult merely helped set up this moment. Most of the time I guided you along the mystic pathways, knowing that the more you got into it, the easier target you would be for me. You *know* the truth, baby, and you know what I can do."

"Yes," Reba whispered, "I'll die. . .I have. . .no choice."

"Reba!" Kinot shouted.

"Not much more time now," Carolyn said. "The pain can't last much longer, can it? Give in, Reba."

Reba appeared to weaken further, her body stopped moving. Only her frightened eyes indicated life Bredeluch moved suddenly. He pushed Miss Carmilla aside and began hitting futilely at the control buttons with his fists.

"It's easy, I've been through it." Carolyn now talked softly. "Give in. Easy."

Kinot tried to lift Reba out of her chair. Some force, probably caused

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the rigidness of her body, held her down.

"Cooperate, please," he said. His voice showed that he was on the verge of crying. "Try to stand up, Reba."

"I can't," she whispered. She did not look at him. Her gaze was fixed on Carolyn.

"Not long now," Carolyn said, "and it'll be all over."

"Bredeluch!" Kinot screamed. "Do something!"

Bredeluch gestured desperately. Then he picked up a chair and heaved it at the TV screen. It bounced away without doing any damage. Carolyn laughed.

"It's shatterproof," whispered Miss Carmilla.

"Why in blue blazes is it shatterproof?" Bredeluch shouted.

"Because," Miss Carmilla said, "because we anticipated that some day a disturbed client might pick up something like a chair and throw it at the screen. It's double-layered shatterproof."

Bredeluch cursed, loudly and violently. Kinot gripped Reba under her arms and pulled with all his strength. He could not budge her.

"Stop," she whispered. "It's no use."

"Ignore her," Kinot said, his voice desperate. "I love you. I do love you!"

"That's what you said to me, too," Carolyn screamed. Her voice's rise in volume startled Kinot, it seemed uncharacteristic. "That's what you said when I was dying."

"And I meant it then."

"Crap! You don't know what a deep emotion's all about. Larry Kinot, the master of control. You always know the precise amount of emotion to display in a given situation. Just like now—while you allow the right degree of desperation to enter your voice, which is just enough to convince Reba and the doctor but is not real, it doesn't come from the gut. How can anybody measure the depth of your love? Reba *or* me? You never blow your cool, never let a feeling interfere with your carefully modulated mental impression of yourself. Don't you think that Reba doesn't know that? Do you think that I didn't back in the great long-ago? I loved you; so I accepted what part of you that you were willing to give. Reba's done the same. We've shared the same heart and we've shared you, and neither of us has won any bargains."

Reba, her face white, shook her head no.

"It's not true! Any of it!" Kinot shouted at Carolyn.

"Don't try your case with me. I *know*, baby!"

"You know nothing. You make blanket assumptions out of—"

"I assume nothing. I know you like a book, the only book I've studied since I don't know when."

"You weren't like this before."

"Not on the surface."

"You were sweet, understanding."

"Which means I sweetly and understandingly accepted your bilge."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I don't remember you ever twisting my words like this."

"You didn't listen."

Reba, her eyes closed, had slumped in the chair. Bredeluch, after holding her pulse, whispered that she was still alive.

"Stop this, Carolyn," Kinot screamed. "Please!"

"There's nothing you can do, Larry. Give up."

"I don't think I ever knew you."

"That's the point, isn't it?"

"I never thought you could be so cruel."

"It's no cruelty. I just don't lie to myself any more."

"But you're wrong! You've distorted everything."

"And you're my main distortion, baby. The phony I loved, the phony Reba loved."

"That's not true. I always was fair and honest with you."

"Maybe. Fair and honest like a Supreme Court justice rendering his objective opinion."

"What the hell did you want?"

"Tears, froth, uncontrollable shivering, irrational violence. . ."

"I don't understand."

"Of course."

"You're not reasonable."

"No, I'm not."

"Bitch!"

"Yes."

He struggled to find another name, another epithet which would suit what he felt for Carolyn at this moment. But the words were no good; the language was insufficient for the anger he felt inside. No words, no shouts, no curses could portray it.

Carolyn began to laugh again, scornfully. He despised that laugh. It symbolized for him everything he'd never known about Carolyn, all the cruelties that the blind lover never suspects. If only she'd stop! He could think if she stopped laughing. But what the hell good was thinking now? There was *nothing* he could do.

In his mind pointed things exploded. His body felt alternately hollow then expanded by fierce inside pressures. The room became distorted, straight lines wavered as if just plucked, light seemed to have jagged edges, people looked like they were made of rubber. Everything suddenly seemed terrible, frightening, apocalyptic. And then it got worse.

The sound of Carolyn's laughter reverberated through the room. Yet it was not at this moment a loud laugh, not the eerie supernatural sort of laugh appropriate to the situation—it was more like a pleasant chuckle of victory. Reba, seemingly shrunk to childlike proportions, looked quite dead. He gaped at her the way a person viewing a play or movie will sometimes watch the chest of an actor whom the hero or villain has just done in. Looking for the telltale suppressed chest movement, the sneaked breath that tells the viewer it's just a story and not the real death that was so final in his mind. Kinot watched for that movement in Reba's chest. The way she slumped caved in her chest, made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it difficult to see if she were breathing or not. She didn't seem to. She must. She didn't seem to.

Carolyn's laugh became louder. Although he knew that she was on TV and that the voice came only from a monaural source, it seemed to divide into stereo. There seemed to be two parts to the voice, one in high and one in lower range. He could separate them, hear the scornful laugh from one direction, the darker more mysterious laugh from another. Impossible. Was this some kind of Madame Electra special effect? Was this fakery after all? Would a vampirish robot come in soon and wake them all up?

But Reba looked so dead.

All his failure—the misuse of his life, the terrible deaths of these two women and the guilt he felt for them—all the failures seemed to rush at him, but not as anything he could recognize or put into words. He saw ugly things which he felt somehow were the representations of all his failures. All his separate failures in distorted lumpish and disintegrating shapes. He knew the shapes had no meaning, that they were nothing like the realities they symbolized; but his mind made the connections anyway, and he responded. He forgot what they meant immediately, as soon as they exploded or broke into pieces, and the next second he knew he had forgotten, but he could not shake the feeling of despair they caused. The room seemed to spin around, first slowly, then faster. Watching, he felt like the owner of a carrousel, standing in the middle, idly watching the circular motion. However, this spin seemed more erratic than the easy movement of a carrousel; instead of the ordinary smooth ride, it was more as if he kept jumping on and off the passing wooden floor. But the room could not be spinning. And if it could not, then it must be himself doing the moving. But if it *was* he, why wasn't everybody gaping at him, trying to restrain him, trying to stop him from acting the fool over his wife's dead body? But the others did not seem to be moving at all. They seemed frozen in action, like the image on the screen when the film suddenly breaks and the actors are stopped in violent midmotion, jerked into mannequin immobility just before the heated film starts to burn. And, for a moment, the seance room was on fire. He reached for Reba to save her, but the fire stopped as suddenly as it had begun. The room became whole again as if the spliced film had been fed back into the projector.

And, on sound track, Carolyn's sardonic stereo laughter.

He knew he must have screamed, but he could not hear the sound of it. Miss Carmilla and Bredeluch remained like statues. Couldn't they hear? Couldn't they respond to his anguished cry? They *must* hear him! Or was he cut off from them? Something had happened to them or to him. It was as if he had suddenly been placed in a compartment where time continued on its straight line, while the others had been left

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trapped in a single minute, or second, of time. He could move at any rate, but the others, the statues, would not be aware of it, or of the time that was passing for him. He could wither and die, and they would remain just like they were now—Bredeluch forever halfway into the action of dropping his helpless hands to his sides, Miss Carmilla always in that slight bend sideways as if she were just twisting to look at something to her right, toward Kinot, and Reba slumped in a position that might have been death. And might as well be death. If she was still alive at that point, at that moment in time, if there really was the shaky tremor of an actress just playing at death, he would never see it. She was dead in that moment. He could stare for hours and never see her chest move.

And, if they were trapped in that moment, what in hell was he? In what time stream did he exist relative to them? When they went on—Bredeluch's hands slapping his hips, Miss Carmilla completing her sideways motion—where would he be? Did another Kinot take over his body in the next split second and leave him behind, able to move freely in *this* moment of time but never break out of it? And why would another Kinot take over now? I've lived in the body for so long now, why send in a sub at this moment?

Carolyn's laughter continued in undertone, unhysterical but menacing.

What if they do go on and no other Kinot takes over, what happens to me in their time? I die. I know it. That's what happening. I'm dying. I am not moving forever in this moment of time. I am *preserving* this moment in my mind because it is my last!

Fear suddenly overcame him, more fear than he'd ever felt before. All the functions of his body seemed to stop at once. His throat seemed to cave in. It seemed like the last second of a children's war game, that moment when your buddy, the winner of the battle, pretends to strangle you and, in doing so, applies a bit too much pressure to the throat and you have to make hysterical gagging noises to inform him that you say uncle. Death began there, at that moment when you thought the dumb bastard would not give in. And what Kinot felt now was that terrible feeling just before pressure was released. Except now the pressure continued.

Death was separated into more stages than he'd ever imagined. It felt as if each part of his body was clicking off separately, like the lights of a Victorian city being snuffed out by a lamplighter. And he was horribly, wretchedly, pathetically afraid. He screamed over and over again. Soon he was screaming just because it proved he was still alive. Suddenly, less terrified, he stopped. The terror could not be maintained, he had to stop to remember what he had been scared of.

Carolyn's laughter, mocking.

He still felt that he was dying, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was calm now. He began to study the main features of the dying process, the suffocation, the gagging, the numbness, the dizziness. But, in the middle of the cataloging, he suddenly realized the humor in the whole situation. What a goddamned joke on Carolyn! She'll go out of her mind when she sees that she's caused my death, too. Carolyn came seeking a petty revenge and hit the jackpot. Reba and I will come spilling into her limbo, and won't we make a tidy threesome!

Carolyn's laughter seemed hollow, as if meaning had been suddenly drained from it.

His heart, which did not seem to be beating, began to hurt. It seemed to fill his chest. It seemed about to explode. In his head sharp waves of pain. A feeling of skin being flayed. Harsh light in the shape of demons seemed to plunge at his eyes with their claws out. Kinot felt new terror as he realized this must be the last moment, the moment of actual death. Everything he could feel seemed in terrible pain. And then it got worse.

Carolyn's laughter, triumphant.

The room disappeared. He walked in muck, sinking down and sliding up, getting gobs of it in his mouth and down his throat. Knives, swords, cleavers flew at him, pierced him, sending searing pain through his body. Shadowy figures grabbed and mauled him. Fire enveloped him. Were all deaths as interminable as this? And then it got worse.

Carolyn's laughter, maniacal.

He saw himself through the eyes of others. He did not look the same, not half as handsome as his pictures. And there were hard lines in his face, the cold dispassionate lines of someone who maintained a cynical pose and let few people share his feelings. His shoulders hunched, like a man beaten. His devil-may-care walk was more the bumbling jounce of the village idiot. Then he saw himself as other viewed him in their minds. He screamed. It was not that they saw him as ugly or bad or anything like that, all of which he could have accepted. What made him scream was that he was so unimportant in their eyes, a nullity, not even a nullity but someone they ran across emotionlessly from time to time. They were not and could not be interested in him. He felt that he could not take any more of this. And then it got worse.

He saw Reba as others saw her. She wasn't so pretty. Age lines which he saw as still youthful were on the verge of becoming the trenches of middle age. To them she seemed expressionless and a little drab about the eyes. (But it was the mystery in her eyes that was alluring!) They saw her as somewhat of a snob, a stand-offish type who made too many silent but obvious judgments on their own innocent follies. Kinot screamed in frustration at how dismissible Reba seemed to them.

Then he saw Carolyn through the brutal look of the others. Her beautiful face, so gentle in Kinot's eyes, seemed chiseled to them. They

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were afraid of her. She grabbed what she wanted. She used her fragility in deceptive strategic ways. They never saw how tender she was, how kind. They misunderstood her completely. Perhaps only he had seen her depths, perhaps he was the only person who really knew her. With his own death no one on earth would remember her correctly. No one. When we die, we leave behind images, *portrayals* of ourselves. If we don't open up to a few people, just a few who can own us, whom we can sell our souls to, then only the lying images will remain. In effect, Carolyn died completely when he died.

Carolyn's laughter, interrupted.

Kinot wished desperately that he'd left something more than images of himself behind. Who would remember *him?* He screamed and thought he had reached absolute bottom. And then it got worse.

No longer an image on a TV screen, Carolyn appeared. She was lovely, dressed in a filmy outfit he had bought for her. She came close. He wanted to touch, wanted so much to touch her. She beckoned to him.

"Come," she said, "it's time."

"No!" he said, backing away. But he wanted to touch her.

"Play it out if you want." Highlights in her beautiful red hair gleamed, as if lit by different lights than those in the room. His desire to touch her almost made him reach for her right then.

"You. . .you're after me." He could barely speak.

"Insight. Your special talent, Larry, *insight.* Right, I am not seeking Reba. What would I want from her, her company? No, I no longer have to tolerate simpletons. This elaborate charade's been all for you, Larry, dear. You're not easy to get to, you so stiffly maintain that intolerable reserve. All of this for you, love—the frightening of Reba, the dumb show with the chimpanzee and the so desperate note, all the beautiful lies about the transplants. From the look on Bredeluch's face, I may've set back medical progress a couple of decades. Amazing how much primitive superstition is buried in the mind of a dedicated scientist. Ah, well, he'll probably figure some of this out when he discovers that his precious client in Brazil is alive and well, and hasn't seen a vision in hours."

Kinot tried to answer her, accuse her, but all he could do was produce gagging noises.

"Ease up, love. Let it happen." She smiled. It was almost the smile of affection that he remembered. Almost. "Take my arm, Larry, then it'll be easier." Again he backed away from her, but this time she advanced on him. There was intense pain in his eyes; suddenly he was blinded, he could hear only her soft, loving voice. "Now, love, let it happen. It's okay. I am with you." She began to laugh again. He screamed.

Vision seemed to return, but he could not see Carolyn any more. He could still hear her laughter. Its sound surrounded him. He seemed to be floating in a vacuum. Pieces of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

himself began to disintegrate, break away from his body in little blobs like air bubbles in space. And his bones shattered. They became thin-pointed splinters which pulled away from his body with a sharp snap. At first he stared. Then his arms began to wave about, trying to catch the pieces which had already broken off. He grabbed a few and tried to press them back onto his body. But there were too many. The ones he'd caught pressed upwards against his hands and he could not hold them and they floated away. Tissue danced as if prodded by a nervous breeze. Blood snaked out of cracks in his arteries and veins. The lower part of his body split off above the hip with a loud noise and severe pain at the point of disconnection. All he could now see of himself were a few lower ribs and his frustrated waving arms. Then they pulled each other off the shoulders, stretching tendons which resisted breaking until one end or the other snapped.

But he could stand it. It wasn't too much.

Then he felt the pieces of his consciousness break away. His mind seemed to go by sections, to drift off as had the parts of his body. Suddenly he seemed to have no memories. Suddenly there was no more outside awareness, all his senses cut off except the ability to hear Carolyn's hideous laughter which now seemed inside of him. All that was left to him was the little hard core of identity, which seemed about to shatter any minute.

Everything, even the laughter, seemed to shut off abruptly. For a moment he seemed to learn what nothingness was. Yet how was that possible—if he was aware of it, how could it be nothingness? Was it nothingness, or emptiness, or only death? Whatever he was, he felt sad rather than afraid.

Gradually he became conscious again. Now he was trapped in the moment of Carolyn's death. The life was just about to go out of her eyes. She was beautiful, as beautiful as he'd always remembered her. He wept now, although he had fought off tears at the real moment of her death. Her last utterance was a little ironic laugh.

Then the demons attacked. They rode on blinding light and pierced every sense. They shattered his eardrums with yowls. Malodorous scents pressed into his nose and mouth. Acrid tastes withered his tongue, constricted his throat. Long nails dug trenches in his eyes. Every nerve of his body was pinched in pain.

But none of it mattered, it was the least pain of all. He could laugh at it. Which he did. The demons performed sustained horrible tortures upon him, and each one was more ridiculous than the previous.

Carolyn's laughter, sardonic, sad, regretful.

The visions cut off suddenly. He was back in the seance room, and Bredeluch was shaking him, pleading with him to come out of it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come out of what?" Kinot asked, dazed. "Was I asleep or what?"

"You definitely were not asleep. I don't know what you were."

The seance room seemed calm. The lights were back on, the Muzak had stopped.

"I was dying, Charles. I almost died. What happened?"

"It didn't look much like dying. If I saw it on stage, I'd call it a pretty frightening display of innate animal ferocity."

Kinot, struggling to think, looked up at the TV screen. Carolyn was gone. The image was again randomly moving colored dots.

"What happened to Carolyn?"

"Don't know. The transmission stopped during your performance. I don't know exactly when. I was busy attending you."

"I was dying. I felt like. . ."

Suddenly he became fully conscious. He saw Reba still slumped in her chair. Her arms dangled over the sides. Fear returned, worse than before. She looked dead. She must not be dead, I can't let her, she will not die. He ran to her, touched her. She felt warm. Bredeluch, on her other side, examined her.

"She's dead, isn't she?" Kinot said.

Bredeluch did not say anything for a moment. "No," he finally said, "she's still holding on. I think we better get her out of here."

Kinot carried her out of the room.

Outside, amid a mad swirl of secretaries and administrators, Bredeluch checked Reba and pronounced her condition improved but exhausted. She remained unconscious, quietly at rest on a leather couch. Kinot and Bredeluch tried to discuss what had happened, but neither had any enthusiasm for the subject. Bredeluch seemed merely happy that the superstitions about transplants were not proven. Kinot could not begin to analyze what he felt.

Reba regained consciousness while Bredeluch was half-heartedly expostulating a psychological explanation for the events.

"Always have to search for an explanation," she mumbled. "Never willing to allow the truth of the mystic experience."

Kinot smiled, held her hand.

"Anyhow," she said, "it's irrelevant to me. I am giving up mysticism for housewifery. What do you think of that, my dear husband?"

"Whatever you want."

She smiled—a warm, loving smile.

"I love you," she said.

"I—" he began, but was afraid to say it. Not quickly and glibly, anyway. It must not be rote, formula. He must not act it out. He was sure that he loved her, but it was not easy to say the words. All of which meant he must not say it right at this moment.

Reba seemed to understand. She did not seem to look or wait for a response. Instead, she again said, "I love you," and returned to sleep.

"I will learn the words," he whispered. "I will learn them."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction
MARKET PLACE

BOOKS-MAGAZINES

SCIENTIFANTASY specialist: Books, magazines. Free catalog. Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood, Saddle River, N.J. 07458.

ONE issue of P.S. Magazine for $.75. Humor and nostalgia by Jean Shepherd, Nat Hentoff, Issac Asimov, Alfred Bester, William Tenn, others. Mercury, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

SPECIALISTS: Science Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction. Books, Pocketbooks. Lists issued. Stephen's Book Service, Post Office Box 321, Kings Park, L.I., New York 11754.

SF-FANTASY books (hardcover), mysteries, westerns. Scarce and OP titles. Free lists. Aspen Bookhouse, RD 1, Freeville, N.Y. 13068.

SF—Fantasy Books for sale. Gordon Barber, 35 Minneapolis Ave., Duluth, Minn. 55803.

TRADE? Send four science fiction paperbacks plus two dollars. Receive seven science fiction books. William Palmer, 11505 Northeast Prescott, Portland, Oregon 97220.

70 page catalog Arkham Fantasy Burroughs, Mirage Press Science Fiction pulp, paperbacks, comics. Send 50¢ Passaic Book Center, 594 Main Avenue, Passaic, N.J. 07055.

SF-Fantasy magazines, books, paperbacks. List free. Collections also purchased. Robert Madle, 4406 Bestor Drive, Rockville, Md. 20853.

Buying Used Science Fiction soft cover books, must be in good condition, pages and cover intact, no major wrinkles, paying 15% of cover price (maximum per book 15¢) plus your postage — ship book rate, wrap securely — send books to Lasky, Box 415, Fresh Meadows, N.Y. 11365.

USED Science Fiction Paperbacks. List 20¢. Horst Schmid, 15429 Dixie, Detroit, Mich. 48239.

SCIENCE FICTION magazines, comic books from 1926 on. Send your want list. Collectors Book Store, 6763 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Ca. 90028.

OUT-OF-PRINT Fantasy, Weird Fiction, SF. Free Lists. Ron Sigler, 321 Shelbourne #607, Toronto, Canada.

RARE PULP MAGAZINES for sale. Also scarce comic books and other collectors items. Send 50¢ for catalogue. (I also buy) David Alexander, P. O. Box 2921, Hollywood, California 90028.

SCIENCE FICTION soft covers, 50% off cover price. For catalog write: Lasky, Box 415, Fresh Meadows, N.Y. 11365.

SALE-Digest science fiction magazines. Astounding, F&SF, Galaxy, Amazing, Fantastic Univ., Fantastic, 1951-1966, 40¢ each. Bond Street Books, 1638 Wilcox Ave, Hollywood, Calif. 90028.

RARE, USED, OUT OF PRINT S.F., Fantasy, Horror. Free Lists. The Haunted Bookshop, Box 134, Uniondale, N.Y. 11553.

CHESS

3D-Chess Rules $2. Club $2/yr. Boards $10. and $20. U.S., Canada 3-D Chess Club, 506 E 14th Street, Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

AUTHORS-SERVICES

Have your stories, articles, poems published for 7¢/word. Any topic. This is your chance. May open door to professional career. Gimmickless!! More information! Clearing House Publications, Box 10575, Denver, Colorado 80210.

MONEY MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

FREE information getting information! Make Money! Box 1807, Madison, Wisc. 53701.

Do you have something to advertise to sf readers? Books, magazines, typewriters, telescopes, computers, space-drives, or misc. Use the F&SF Market Place at these low, low rates: $3.00 for minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. Send copy and remittance to: Adv. Dept., Fantasy and Science Fiction, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HYPNOTISM

LEARN WHILE ASLEEP. Hypnotize with your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free. Sleep-learning Research Association, Box 24-FS, Olympia, Washington, 98502.

Hypnotism Revealed. Free Illustrated Details. Powers, 12015 Sherman Road, North Hollywood, California 91605.

FREE Hypnotism, Self-Hypnosis. Sleep learning Catalog! Drawer G-400, Ruidoso, New Mexico 88345.

OCCULT

INNER SPACE. The Magazine of the Psychic and Occult, featuring interviews with Isaac Bashevis Singer and Isaac Asimov, Hollywood and the Occult, How to Consult a Medium, and more. Send $1.00 to MERCURY PRESS, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

OCCULT WORSHIP PRODUCTS, Finest available, blessed, gifts, services. Jumbo catalog: $2. (Refundable). OCCULTIC CHURCH, 1115-F Lyon, Port Huron, Mich. 48060.

PERSONAL

WITHCRAFT, VOODOO HEAD-QUARTERS. Spells Galore! Occult Correspondence Club. Catalog, 25¢. Cauldron, Box 403-FSF, Rego Park, N.Y. 11374.

Happiness, Love, Success, numberscope plus number for 1971, $4.00. Print name, birthdate, address to: Your Key, Box 76113, Los Angeles, Calif. 90005.

Clairvoyant answers 3 questions $2.00. enclose birthdate, healing, prosperity ritual $5.00. Gertrude Wojcik D.D., 1650 N. Brookfield, South Bend, Ind. 46628.

SPECIAL OFFER. Learn about your inner self, your drives and personality. Get your individual horoscope at specially reduced prices. Used to be $6.00, now only $4.00. Send date and time of birth to: Horoscope House, Rt. 3, Box 73d, Wayzata, Minn. 55391.

Your future told. Card readings. Asmani-Amirabad—Kuche Majd 1-58—Tehran—Iran, $10, check only, brings personal reading in full.

PSORIASIS SUFFERERS: DISCOURAGED? Write for Free important information that is helping thousands! PIXACOL, Box 38-FF, Avon Lake, Ohio 44012.

JUAREZ MEXICO remailing service $1.00. Yadzia McKenchnie, 10116 Dellwood Drive, El Paso, Texas 79924.

BRILLIANT POLYMATH will give counsel on any subject. $10.00. Frank Rede, Box 265, Sierra Madre, Calif. 91024.

MISCELLANEOUS

ESP LABORATORY. This new research/service group can help you. For FREE information write: Al G. Manning, ESP Laboratory, 7559 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046.

FOREIGN EDITIONS of Fantasy and Science Fiction. A few copies of French, German, Italian, Portuguese and British editions available at 75¢ each; three for $2.00. Mercury Press, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

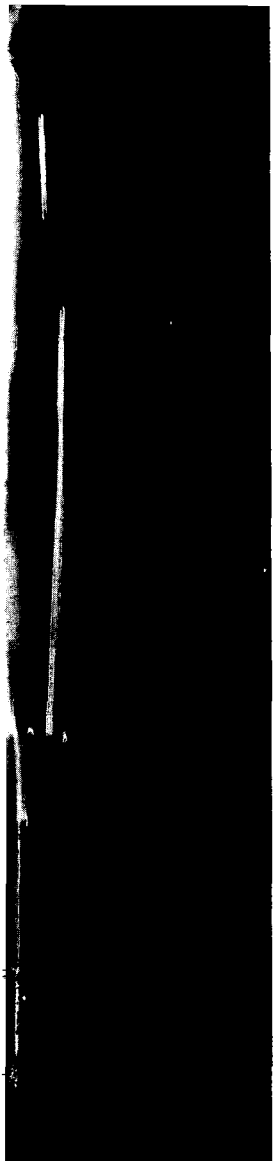
Protect yourself. Police model bodyguard sprays a powerful chemical that temporarily blinds attackers and leaves them helpless. This product has been laboratory tested and is safe to use. Contains one ounce. Send $3.00 PPD to Linco, 236 Magnolia Ave., Elizabeth, N.J. 07206. Please stage age when ordering. Not sold to minors.

MENTAL CONTROL. Electronic instrument helps you learn to control habits, motivation, etc. with Brain-wave Bio-feedback. Free info. Roe, Co., Box 1116-A, Garland, Tex. 75040.

TELL FORTUNES like an expert! For yourself, others with "magic" Gypsy Witch fortune cards created by famous mystic. Nothing to memorize. Amaze friends. 54 full-color cards. $1.98. Scott's, Box 10437-B, Houston, Texas 77024.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction has been awarded the HUGO as the world's best science fiction magazine. This is the seventh time the magazine has won the award and the third consecutive year.

The Hugo award — named after Hugo Gernsback, the father of modern science fiction — is the annual achievement award of the World Science Fiction Convention. The awards were presented at the convention's 29th annual meeting in Boston.

F&SF is proud to be a leader in a field that is gaining an increasing amount of attention and respect. The award is received with gratitude and as an incentive for the future, in which we will continue to bring you the freshest, most stimulating entertainment in the field.

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED